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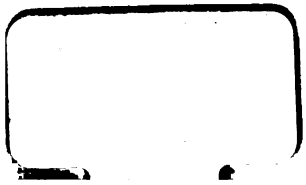

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Douxmenil

L'Doutmenil,]

THE

MEMOIRS

OF

NINON DE L'ENCLOS,

With her LETTERS to

MONSR DE ST EVREMOND

AND TO THE

MARQUIS DE SEVIGNÉ.

Collected and Tranſlated from the FRENCH,

BY A LADY.

VOL. II.

Donec erunt ignes, arcuſque cupidinis arma,
Diſcentur numeri, culte Tibulle, tui.
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THE

LETTERS

OF

Mademoiſelle Ninon de l'Enclos

TO THE

Marquis de Sevigné.

LETTER XXI.

YOU would uſe integrity in love, Marquis! You are far gone truly. I ſhall not ſhew your letter. You would be made a jeſt of. You cannot, you ſay, employ the artifice I adviſed you to. Your candor and refined ſentiments

might have raiſed your character in ancient days. Love was then conſidered as an affair of honour and punctilio. But at preſent, ſince the corruption of times has quite changed our notions, it is treated meerly as a ſport of vanity or caprice. Your inexperience has left a ſtiffneſs in your moral that will certainly demoliſh you, if your good ſenſe does not ſupple you to the manners of the age.

One muſt not now-a-days, keep a window in their breaſts. All is grimace: we muſt take up with complaiſance, profeſſions and outward ſhew: 'tis an univerſal comedy, and the world are much in the right to perform it. Society would ſoon be at an end, were we mutually to declare our true ſentiments of each other, the bad along with the good. The neceſſary intercourſe of mankind obliged them to lay aſide this uncouth ſincerity, and to aſſume a certain

tain poliſhed phraſe, and flattering addreſs in the place of it.

This habit by degrees, obtained in galantry, and notwithſtanding your nice ſcruples, you muſt agree that when the manners of politeneſs are not employed to ridicule or deceive, they are to be reckoned among the ſocial virtues—and the commerce in which 'tis moſt neceſſary to diſguiſe our ſentiments, is galantry. Upon many occaſions, a lover gains as much by concealing the greatneſs of his paſſion, as he does upon others by feigning it.

I know the Counteſs, her character. She has more addreſs than you. I dare ſay, that ſhe diſſembles her affection for you with as much pains as you take to multiply the proofs of yours. I muſt repeat it again—Be leſs aſſiduous, and you will be better received. Make her jealous in her turn. Give her fears of

loſing you. I'll warrant then, you'll ſoon find her more complying. 'Tis at leaſt, the ſureſt way of knowing the rank you hold in her affections.

Adieu.

LETTER XXII.

A TEN days ſilence, Marquis! I really began to be uneaſy. The application of my advice then, has been ſucceſsful. I wiſh you joy of it. But I am angry with you for being chagrined becauſe ſhe would not make you a confeſſion in form. The *I love you* it ſeems, is a precious expreſſion with you. During this fortnight you have been endeavouring to penetrate the ſentiments of the Counteſs, and have at length attained them. You have diſcovered her regards for you. What ſhould you deſire more? Would a ſimple confeſſion give you any further power over her heart? There is ſomething impolitic in this

this conduct: for do you know that nothing is more apt to diſguſt a woman of any nicety, than the inſiſting upon that very expreſſion ſhe has refuſed you? You are much miſtaken.—To a lover of true delicacy, this refuſal would be infinitely preferable to an explicit declaration.

Would you underſtand your true intereſt? Inſtead of preſſing your miſtreſs upon this point, you ſhould endeavour rather, as I told you before, to hide from herſelf the progreſs of her attachment toward you. Contrive to win her affections before ſhe perceives your deſign; and conceal it as much as poſſible, even from her own obſervation.

Can one imagine a ſituation more charming than to perceive a heart intereſted on ones behalf, without the leaſt conſciouſneſs in itſelf; growing warm by degrees, and melting away to the

moſt perfect tenderneſs? What tranſport to rejoice in ſecret over all its emotions, to guide, to augment, to precipitate them, and to congratulate ones ſelf on the victory, before the yielding fair has ſurmiſed even a ſuſpicion of the ſiege! Theſe are what I ſtile pleaſures indeed!

Attend to me Marquis, behave yourſelf toward the Counteſs, as if the confeſſion had already eſcaped her. Perhaps you may never be able to prevail on her to pronounce the words, *I love you*; but 'tis becauſe ſhe really loves you that ſhe will not ſay ſo; while at the ſame time ſhe is doing every thing neceſſary to convince you of it. Women labour under great difficulties: they are at leaſt as willing as you, to acknowledge the paſſion you have inſpired them with. But what would you have them do, Marquis? Men, moſt ingenious to forge ſhackles for themſelves, have affixed

fixed a certain ſhame to the confeſſion of our paſſion; and whatever notions ye may have framed of our manners of thinking, believe me that this ſame declaration is always a mortifying circumſtance to us. Thoſe who have the leaſt knowledge of the world muſt be very ſenſible of the conſequences. The *I love you*, in itſelf, is certainly a very innocent expreſſion, but the effects attending it, muſt neceſſarily alarm us. It reſts upon you then, to conceal them from us, and to ſhut our eyes upon the precipices you are leading us toward.

Beſides, Marquis, attend to this nice point. Your obſtinacy in perſiſting in this confeſſion, is leſs the effect of love, than vanity; and you will find it a difficult matter to deceive us about the real motives of your inſtances. Nature has endowed us with an admirable inſtinct; and has taught us to diſtinguiſh with great preciſion, between what ariſes

from the paſſion itſelf, and what is heterogeneous from it.

Ever indulgent to the effects produced by the love we have ourſelves inſpired, we freely pardon ye the indiſcretions, the extravaganees—the whole catalogue of follies you lovers are liable to. But, you will always find us intractable whenever your pride attempts to combat ours. It is hardly to be credited, but you often diſguſt us by things which are by no means neceſſary to your own happineſs. Your vanity graſps at *ſhadows*, while *ſubſtances* eſcape you.

If you would govern yourſelf by my judgment, turn aſide from this vain purſuit, begin to enjoy a ſurer earneſt of your triumph, taſte the dear pleaſure of hiding this ſecret from her own heart, and ſuffer her for a while, to rejoice in her *inſolvent* ſecurity. Suppoſe that

that your importunities ſhould at length wreſt this ſo envied phraſe from her lips; what more certain advantage would you gain by it? Your doubts would they then ceaſe? Could you reſt ſatisfied whether you owed this expreſſion to complaiſance or to love?

I know women perfectly well. They may deceive by premeditated action, or deliberate ſpeech; but the involuntary tokens of a paſſion they are ſtriving to conceal, bear ſure and certain teſtimony. In fine, the confeſſions truly flattering, are never thoſe we make, but thoſe that eſcape us.

LETTER XXIII.

WILL you pardon me, Marquis? I laugh at your afflictions! You take things extremely to heart! Some indiſcretions of yours have raiſed the reſentment of the Counteſs, and your inquietude

quietude is inexpreſſible. You kiſſed her hand with an emphaſis that was taken notice of by the company; ſhe ſhewed public marks of her diſpleaſure; and the conſtant preferences you obſerve toward her, ever mortifying to other women, have expoſed you to the piqued railleries of the Marchioneſs, her ſiſter-in-law.

Theſe are in fact truth, moſt unfortunate events! But are you really ſo ſimple as to betake yourſelf to deſpair, upon the outward appearance of ſuch a quarrel, without conceiving the leaſt hope of an inward forgiveneſs? 'Tis left for me then, to re-aſſure your courage, and in order to this, I ſhall be forced to reveal ſome more of our female myſteries to you. I cannot upon every occaſion, make apologies for my ſex.—I owe you frankneſs. I have promiſed it—and I acquit myſelf.

Women are generally actuated by two incompatible paſſions—the deſire of pleaſing, and the fear of infamy. Judge you of our embarraſſment! On one hand, we are ardent to have witneſſes of the effects of our charms.—For ever occupied toward the making ourſelves taken notice of, and tranſported with every opportunity of humbling other women, we would render them ſpectators of every homage paid us, and of all the preferences we obtain. Would you know wherein the pleaſure lies here? In mortifying the pride of our rivals meerly.—Thoſe indiſcretions which betray the ſentiments we have inſpired, delight us in proportion to their deſpair. In fine, ſuch imprudences convince us better of your paſſion, than that timidity and caution which are incapable of celebrating our charms.

But, on the other hand, what bitterneſs allays our ſweeteſt pleaſures! Blend-

ed

ed with theſe advantages, are the malice of our rivals, and perhaps the contempt of our lovers. Beſides, another hard caſe is, that the world knows no difference between thoſe who receive your addreſſes, and thoſe who reward them. Alone, or in ſober thought, every rational woman would prefer the character of chaſtity, to the fame of beauty. But, place the beſt of us in competition with a rival, capable of diſputing with her the prize—were ſhe to riſque that reputation ſhe was the moment before ſo jealous of—was the lover to endanger it to the laſt degree—no conſideration is of equal weight with the triumphant pleaſure of ſeeing herſelf preferred.

You will receive your preferences in turn; ſhe will imagine at firſt, that ſhe pays them to gratitude alone; but you will find them earneſts of her affection. Avoiding to appear ungrateful, we exceed

ceed to fondneſs[1]. Your indiſcretions then, never offend us. When we ſeem to reſent, 'tis becauſe we ſhould ſave appearances, and that you would be yourſelves the firſt to cenſure a too remiſs indulgence.

But take care how you miſtake this point.—Not to treſpaſs, upon ſuch occaſions, would be a certain way to offend us. We recommend prudence and diſcretion to ye. Is not this the part given us to play? Is it neceſſary that we ſhould teach you yours? Oft have I heard it ſaid, that to take the *Letter*, was to miſtake the *Spirit* of a law. You will anſwer our intentions, when you know how to conſtrue them.

[1] There is the ſame ſentiment in the Orphan.

"Great ſpirits bear misfortunes hardly;
"Good offices claim gratitude: and pride,
"Where power is wanting, will uſurp a little,
"And make us, rather than be thought behind-hand,
"Pay over price."

LET-

LETTER XXIV.

THE Counteſs it ſeems, is at preſent on the defenſive. You think ſhe has now, no other deſign but to prove your attachments. Whatever preferences you mark towards her, however indiſcreetly you teſtify your paſſion, ſhe receives them all without reſentment:—the leaſt apology ſilences her reproofs, and her piques have ſomething ſo engaging in them, that you even lay traps to provoke them.

I rejoice heartily with you in the pleaſure that ſuch a ſucceſs muſt afford you.—But, however theſe proceedings may flatter you, if you have any eſteem for her you ſhould endeavour to put an end to them. Women who have any ſenſe, or the leaſt attention to their reputations, but little underſtand their true intereſts in multiplying thus, by an affected

affected incredulity, the occaſions of cenſure. Muſt they not know it is not their moſt frail moments that moſt affect their characters? The doubts they pretend about the paſſion they have inſpired, do them often more injury, even than their defeat itſelf.

While they remain incredulous, a thouſand imprudences expoſe them. They break bulk and vend their reputations by retail. While a lover finds them ſtill dubious of his attachments, he throws aſide all reſerve, whenever he meets with any opportunity of ſhewing the ſincerity of his profeſſions. The moſt indiſcreet earneſtneſs, the moſt diſtinguiſhed preferences, and the moſt unguarded ſolicitude, appear to him the ſureſt method of conviction. And can he make oſtentation of all theſe cares and aſſiduities, without having them taken notice of by the world—without piquing the pride of other women—

with-

without provoking their moſt cenſorious reflections?

As ſoon as preliminaries are ſettled, that is, as ſoon as we begin to believe ourſelves really beloved, nothing appears outwardly, nothing tranſpires.—And, if our engagements happen to be ſuſpected, if our diſguiſe is diſcovered, it muſt be from the recollection of what had paſſed before our affections were determined. I wiſh then, for the ſake of both parties, that whenever a woman perceives herſelf indifferent to a lover, inſtead of ſuffering him to be amuſed by vain hopes, ſhe would immediately give him his *audience of leave*. But at the ſame time, I would adviſe that the moment ſhe is perſuaded ſhe is truly beloved by a man ſhe likes, ſhe will acknowledge this conviction.—*Saving and reſerving to herſelf* however, the *dear right* of obliging him to hope, fear, pray and beſeech, as long as ſhe thinks fit, before

ſhe

ſhe confeſſes her reciprocal affection. For one cannot ſeem to doubt, without laying the lover under a neceſſity of proving his ſincerity; and he cannot demonſtrate it with ſucceſs, without making the public his confidents, by the too great earneſtneſs of his devoirs.

This advice would have been by no means neceſſary in former times, when the want of addreſs in men, ſuffered women to remain intractable. But now-a-days, that the reſolution of the aſſailants leave us ſo little power of defence—at preſent, when it is affirmed, that ſince the invention of powder, no citadel is impregnable—why ſhould we expoſe ourſelves to the tedioufneſs of a ſiege in form, when it is certain, that after a great deal of loſs and trouble, we muſt capitulate at laſt?

Then teach your charming Counteſs this prudent leſſon.—Shew her the inconve-

conveniences of any further diffidence; you will convince her of your paſſion. —You will force her to believe you, by the management ſhe ſhould have of her reputation, which will ſupply her with one reaſon more for according you a credit, which ſhe has perhaps been for ſome time in pain to refuſe you.

Farewel.

LETTER XXV.

MY laſt letter then, has provoked you Marquis, and you inſiſt upon it that 'tis not impoſſible to meet with virtuous women, even in theſe our days. And well! Did I ever deny it? In comparing women to places beſieged, did I ſay that there were no towns which had never been taken? Nay, how could I ſay ſo, when there are many that were never inveſted? You ſee then, how perfectly I agree with you. But to prevent any farther miſtakes between us, on this point,

point, let me explain myſelf a little. Here follows my ſyſtem of faith, upon this article.

I ſtedfaſtly believe in women of virtue, who have never been aſſaulted, or where the ſiege has been ill carried on. I believe alſo, in women of virtue, tho' aſſaulted and well inveſted—when they happen to have neither a turn for galantry, nor ſtrong paſſions, nor opportunity, nor a diſagreeable huſband.

I have a mind to repeat to you, on this occaſion, a ſenſible converſation I had once, upon this ſubject, when I was very young, with a certain prude, whom an unlucky adventure happened to betray to public cenſure. I had but little experience at that time, and judged always of others with that ſeverity one is apt to preſerve, till our own perſonal weakneſſes have inſpired us with ſomewhat more of indulgence toward the failings

failings of our neighbours. I had made very free with this lady's character, and ſhe had heard it. I met her accidentally one day, at the houſe of a friend. She took me aſide, and held the following diſcourſe with me, which made ſuch an impreſſion on my memory, that the very words have not been yet effaced.

" It is not with deſign to reproach " you, ſaid ſhe, with the liberty of " ſpeech you have taken, relative to my " misfortune, that I have ſought this " opportunity of entertaining you alone. " It is to inform you of ſome ſentiments " upon this topic, which if you do not " die very young, you may perhaps, " one day, experience the full force " of.

" You have cenſured my conduct " freely, and ſeem to regard me with " that diſdain, which argues how much " you are elated, on account of your

" having never yet given the world
" any manner of advantage againſt
" you. You imagine that you have
" virtue, and preſume this principle
" will ever abide with you. Theſe are,
" my dear child, but the illuſions of
" your ſelf-ſufficience. I am called up-
" on to inſtruct your inexperience, and
" to make you ſuſpect, that ſo far from
" being able to depend upon this ſame
" virtue, which renders you ſo inexor-
" able to others, you cannot be certain
" even whether you have any of it, at
" all. This aſſertion may perhaps ſur-
" prize you, but lend me your whole
" attention, and you may probably be
" ſoon convinced of the truth of my
" affirmation.

" Men have not yet paid their ad-
" dreſſes to you: your mirrour alone,
" has given you an idea of your charms.
" Your heart—I judge from the care-
" leſſneſs of your whole deportment—
" has

" has not yet entered you into its ſe-
" cret councils. The impulſes of na-
" ture have not hitherto *Here ſhe was*
" *miſtaken* — explained themſelves to
" you. While you remain in ſuch an
" indolent ſituation, or while your
" guardians *keep you in view*, if I may
" ſo expreſs myſelf, I will myſelf be re-
" ſponſible for you.

" But—after your heart has diſ-
" courſed you a little—when thoſe eyes
" that wound already, ſhall have re-
" ceived the addition of ſentimental life
" and expreſſion—when thoſe *windows*
" *to the breaſt* ſhall have betrayed love
" by intuition—when interior move-
" ments ſhall have rouſed you from ſu-
" pineneſs—in fine, when inclinations
" almoſt ſmothered by the ſcruples of
" ſtrict education, may have occaſion-
" ed you to bluſh ſometimes, in ſecret
" —then, my dear prude, your own ſen-
" ſibility, and the ſtruggles you will

" exert

" exert to overcome it, may by degrees,
" diminiſh your ſeverity toward others,
" and ſuffer their failings to plead ſome
" defence before your too rigid tribunal.
" —The judge will mitigate the ver-
" dict.—The experience of your own
" weakneſs will caution you from deem-
" ing your virtue infallible. Nay,
" your ſurprize may be ſtill carried far-
" ther, and the little aid you may
" be able to deduce from thence, will
" naturally raiſe ſome ſuſpicion, that
" in reality, you never were poſſeſſed
" of ſuch a principle at all.

" Can one be aſſured that a man is
" brave, who has never been eſſayed?
" Women are in the ſame predicament.
" Experience alone, equally approves
" chaſtity, and aſcertains valour. 'Till
" we have tried an enemy, we are ig-
" norant how far he is redoubtable, and
" what degree of proweſs it may be re-

" quiſite to oppoſe to him [a]. In like " manner, before a woman has the " right to compliment herſelf, on ac- " count of virtue or chaſtity, as eſſen- " tially within her own powers, ſhe " ſhould be certain that no danger " however great, no motive though " ever ſo preſſing, nor any pretence " how plauſible ſoever, can have force " enough to overcome her reſolution. " It is requiſite that the moſt fa- " vourable opportunity, the fondeſt " paſſion, the ſureſt reliance on ſecre- " cy, the moſt perfect eſteem and con- " fidence in the lover, in a word, that " all theſe allurements combined toge- " ther, ſhall not be ſufficient to warp " her integrity.

[a] Fighting is bravery, but declining it is prudence: and there is this happy difference between the ſexes, with regard to this point, that men may ſometimes injure their character, but women univerſally inſure theirs, by avoiding the conflict. *The Parthian exerciſe is our beſt diſcipline.*

" In

" In reality, to be aſſured that her " virtues is to be accepted, in the pro- " per ſignification of the expreſſion, ſhe " muſt be one who has vindicated her " chaſtity from all theſe united dan- " gers: for it would be but a ſlight " merit to have reſiſted love, without " conſtitution — opportunity, without " paſſion—or deſires, without occaſion. " Her chaſtity muſt ſtill remain pro- " blematical, before ſhe has been en- " countered by all the forces that are " capable of being brought down " againſt her. For it may well be urg- " ed, that with a different kind of " complexion, ſhe might not have re- " ſiſted love: or, that an unlucky oc- " caſion might have given advantage " againſt her."

" At this rate then, I replied, there " may not be ſuch a perſon in the " world, as a virtuous woman: for, 'tis

" very probable that we may not be " able to produce a ſingle inſtance, " where ſuch a train of artillery has " been played off againſt any one for- " treſs." "'Tis more than probable, ſays " ſhe; but would you know the reaſon?" " Becauſe ſuch a combined force is " rarely requiſite to conquer our reſiſt- " ance. Sometimes, one of theſe enе- " mies alone, may be ſufficient to do " our buſineſs."

I ſtill debated—" You ſeem to think " then, ſaid I, that our virtue is by no " means in our own power, ſince you " make it to depend upon ſo many " circumſtances, foreign to our own " election."

" Certainly—prithee anſwer me—Is it " within the power of your own election " to give yourſelf a warm or a cold " complexion? Can you aſſume reſolu- " tion ſufficient to combat the impetuo-

" ſity of paſſion ? Can you arrange all
" the circumſtances of your life ſo hap-
" pily, as never to find yourſelf alone,
" with a lover you approve, who
" knows his advantages, and how to
" profit of them ? In ſhort, is it in
" your power to prevent his addreſſes,
" though innocent at firſt, from mark-
" ing on your affections, thoſe im-
" preſſions, which it is natural for them
" to ſtrike ? Thoſe things are certainly,
" neither within our option, or our
" power.——And to affirm the con-
" trary, would be as unphiloſophic,
" as to ſay that ſteel may reſiſt the
" loadſtone.

" And, yet you pretend that your
" virtue is within your own province !
" How vain to attribute to ones ſelf a
" principle to-day, which we may be
" in danger of forfeiting to-morrow !
" The chaſtity of women, like every
" other advantage, boaſted or poſſeſſed

" by mortals, is a peculiar grace from
" heaven. —— It is a *boon*, and there-
" fore may be refuſed us.

" Conſider then, how partially you
" vaunt yourſelf, from the meer pre-
" ſumptions of your ſelf-ſufficience;
" and acknowledge your injuſtice, in
" ſo uncharitably cenſuring thoſe who
" may have received from nature an
" irreſiſtible proneneſs to love, whom a
" violent paſſion might have overpow-
" ered, or who may have been ſur-
" prized at ſome of thoſe unlucky
" moments, in which perhaps, you
" might not have extricated yourſelf,
" with better ſucceſs.

" If you'll attend, I ſhall ſupply you
" with a farther proof of the juſtneſs
" of my reaſoning. Are you not ſe-
" cretly of opinion, that every woman
" who would preſerve her integrity,
" ſhould aſſiduouſly parry every kind
" of

" of advantage that may poſſibly be
" taken againſt her? That ſhe ought
" to pay attention even to trifles, the
" moſt minute in themſelves, becauſe
" they may lead perchance, to things
" of more importance? 'Tis much a
" ſafer refuge, to diſcourage the pur-
" ſuit by a proper reſerve, than to de-
" pend upon our defence, upon the at-
" tack.

" May not the proof of my propoſi-
" tion be evinced from this one argu-
" ment alſo, that the experience of
" mothers induces them to lay every
" kind of reſtraint upon their daugh-
" ters, that prudence can deviſe? They
" proceed further.—A cautious matron
" depends neither upon the principles
" of her ward, nor on the fear of in-
" famy, nor upon the unfavourable
" opinions ſhe has inſtilled with regard
" to the morals of men: ſhe keeps her

" cauſe you have had ſome advantages
" above her.

" I do not, however, take away from
" the merit of your virtue, in order to
" leſſen your attachment to it: but,
" by giving you ſome idea of your
" own weakneſs, I mean only to draw
" from you a little indulgence, toward
" thoſe unhappy ones, whom too impe-
" tuous a paſſion, or the fortuitouſneſs of
" other circumſtances, may have preci-
" pitated into a ſituation, ſo truly mor-
" tifying to their own reflections. My
" ſole intent is, to convince you, that
" you ſhould not exult ſo much upon
" an advantage, which you are not in-
" debted to yourſelf for, and which the
" accidents of to-morrow, may per-
" haps, deprive you of."

She would have proceeded, but was interrupted by perſons who joined us.

It

It was not long before my own experience convinced me, that I ought not to have conceived ſo high an opinion of many virtues, which had been impoſed upon me for ſuch before — beginning with my own.

LETTER XXVI.

I Perfectly agree with you, Marquis — Though the ſentiments I communicated to you in my laſt letter, may appear true in ſpeculation, it may however be dangerous that all women ſhould be too much convinced of them. It is not through an opinion of our frailty, that we are likely to remain chaſte; but from an happy perſuaſion that we are free agents, and at perfect liberty to reſiſt or yield. Is it by telling a ſoldier he ſhall be overcome, that you inſpirit his courage to the combat? But you might eaſily have perceived that the perſon who harangued in my letter, had

had a perſonal intereſt in eſtabliſhing her philoſophy.

It is true, that to look narrowly into the general frailty of human nature, her arguments will appear ſpecious, at leaſt; —but it may be juſtly apprehended, that by allowing us to reaſon thus, upon the nature of virtue, we admit thoſe rules to be doubtful, which we ſhould implicitly accept; and practiſe as ordinances, the very examining into which is to be deemed a crime.

Beſides, to perſuade women that their virtue is not ſpecifical, would probably deſtroy their ſtrongeſt motive for preſerving it. Namely, the fond opinion, that it is their own province they are defending. Diſcouragement would be the natural conſequence of ſuch an argument: ſo that it could poſſibly ſerve no other purpoſe, than to leſſen the ſilent upbraidings of a frail woman, under the

the guilt of a vicious conduct. But, let us proceed to matters which are of conſequence to yourſelf alone.

In fine, after a world of doubts, fears, and revolutions in your amour, you are at length convinced of your happineſs. You have wrought up the Counteſs to one of thoſe tender moments, when ſhe could no longer retain her ſecret; and ſhe has at length pronounced without reſerve, that charming word, you have ſo long and paſſionately wiſhed to hear the ſound of. She has been carried farther.—Some involuntary teſtimonies have eſcaped her, which more ſufficiently aſcertain her affection toward you. Theſe, inſtead of weakening your paſſion, have added new fewel to the flame. You are, in a word, the happieſt mortal alive. If you knew the thorough ſatisfaction I receive from your preſent ſituation, it would probably give ſome little increaſe to it.

The

The firſt ſacrifice ſhe offered you, was to baniſh the Chevalier. But you declined it, and you judged right. This would have been to have expoſed the Counteſs, without gaining any thing, on your own part. And indeed, I have generally obſerved, that women oftener loſe themſelves by imprudencies, than by real faults. The confidence you have repoſed in her, by ſo generous a proceeding, muſt have a delicate effect upon her ſentiment.

Every thing, thus far, is as well as one could reaſonably hope for. But to ſpeak freely, the turn this adventure ſeems to take, begins to alarm me. We ſet out, if you remember, upon a maxim, that love was to be treated rather *cavalierly:* you were not to ſuffer that affection to obtain more than a ſlight and temporary ſway over your heart, and not a formal and permanent empire. But I begin to obſerve, that matters by

degrees,

degrees, aſſume a ſerious face, and you actually ſeem of late, to conſider this paſſion with a certain air of dignity, that renders me uneaſy. The acknowledgment of true merit, real qualities, and an amiable character, ſeem to enter into the motives of your attachment; which joined to her more obvious beauties, have rendered you a *forlorn hope*, in turn. Eſteem is a dangerous ingredient, mixed up with galantry. It does not leave one ſufficiently at liberty; and reduces love to an *occupation*, rather than an *amuſement*. In fine, I become apprehenſive, that your adventure may ſoon take a turn, perhaps rather grave, than gay.

But poſſibly, the ſpirit of the Counteſs may raiſe up freſh commotions; and new difficulties may re-animate your attachment. ——To profound a peace ſuffers it to relax. Security weakens love. When formal ſyſtems once take

poſſeſſion of the heart, paſſion ſubſides, indolence takes place, wearineſs ſucceeds, and diſguſt finally cloſes the ſcene.

LETTER XXVII.

MADAME de Sevigné does not agree in my opinion, you ſay, with regard to the true cauſes of love. She pretends that there are many women who know nothing but the fair ſide of this paſſion, and that the ſenſes come not in for the leaſt ſhare in their attachment. She adds, that tho' what ſhe is pleaſed to ſtile my *ſyſtem*, were true, it would be a very improper piece of philoſophy for a woman to utter, and might have a bad effect upon morals.

Theſe are ſerious rebukes indeed, but what foundation have they? None—that I can ſee. I am ſorry to find that Madame de Sevigné has not read my

letters

letters in the *ſpirit* they were written. *Syſtems!* ſhe does me too much honour truly. I never had ſtudious application enough for *ſyſtems*. Beſides I have always looked upon them as philoſophic dreams, and does ſhe receive all I have ſaid as the ſport of fancy only? We ſeem to be very far from a reckoning. I *imagine* nothing. I paint *real* objects. I would eſtabliſh a certain truth——in order to which, I would not ſurprize the wit, but challenge the underſtanding. She might perhaps, be ſtruck with ſome of my propoſitions, though they appeared to me ſo very ſelf-evident, that I did not ſtay to prove them. Nor indeed, is it worth while to borrow geometrical ſcales, for weighing a maxim in galantry.

Beſides, I am ſo much averſe to the pedantry of argument, that I would ſooner give up a point, than contend it. Madame de Sevigné, you ſay, is acquainted

quainted with a great many female *Platoniſts*. Agreed.—Let her take her *exceptions*, and leave me the *rule*. I will grant too, if ſhe pleaſes, that there are certain *privileged* ſouls in this wicked world—for I never denied the *virtues—of conſtitution*. Theſe women I make her a preſent of alſo. I make no critic upon them. Their characters are irreproachable. They muſt not, however, expect encomiums from me. I wiſh them joy—*if poſſible*—and that's enough.

In the mean time, examine them philoſophically, and you will perceive the truth of my original maxim. *The heart muſt be occupied*. If nature prompts not, or inclines them not more particularly to galantry, you'll find that ſome other object has laid hold of their affections, in its ſtead. Some become quite inſenſible to love, becauſe they have expended all the ſentiment they were capable of, upon ſome other paſſion. The

Count

Count de Lude I am told, has not been always regarded with indifference, by Madame de Sevigné—But a moſt parental fondneſs for Madame de Grignan ſwallows up the *whole woman* in her ſoul, at preſent.

She ſays farther, that I am extremely blameable toward my own ſex: if I had the leaſt charity, I ſhould have concealed the faults or imperfections I have been ſo quick-ſighted as to diſcover in them—or, to expreſs it more juſtly—that my ſex has made me diſcover in myſelf.

But really Marquis, do you imagine that if all I have ſaid ſhould be printed, women would be angry with me? You do not know them. On the contrary, they would find their account in it greatly—for in effect, to ſay that they are led toward galantry, by a mechanical impulſe, is in a great meaſure to ſet them at their eaſe.

eaſe. Has it not the appearance of reſtoring the credit of their *fatality* -- their *ſtroke of ſympathy*[1], which they are ſo ready to offer as excuſes for their weakneſs; and in which, by the by, I have ſo little faith. In conſidering love as the reſult of reaſon, you are not aware of the blow you give their pride, by rendering them thus reſponſible for their choice, good or bad.

In ſhort, Marquis, women of every character would have reaſon to be ſatisfied with my letters. The metaphyſicians, thoſe whom their kind ſtars have peculiarly organized, might there obſerve with triumph, their ſuperiority over others: they would congratulate themſelves upon ſuch advantage, and impute the merit ſolely to their particular virtue. While women of a leſs ſeraphic mold, ought to be much oblig-

[1] See the firſt paragraph of Letter VI.

ed

ed to me for revealing a ſecret that lies heavy at their hearts. It has been made their duty to diſſemble their ſentiments, and they would maintain this decency, at as little expence of pleaſure as poſſible. They would be pleaſed then, to have the truth diſcovered, without their betraying it themſelves. Whoever therefore, ſhall anatomize their hearts, will do them a moſt grateful piece of ſervice. Thus ſhould I recommend myſelf to our ſex, by a double addreſs, reſpectively agreeable; in adopting maxims that favour their inclinations, and by affording to ſome, occaſions of diſplaying their extraordinary delicacy.

Indeed, Marquis, you diſcover a perfect ignorance of women, to imagine they would be offended at my philoſophy upon this ſubject. 'Tis a certain truth that they would rather be even ſpoken ill of, than not to be ſpoken of at all. So that had I written theſe eſſays with

with that very uncharitable deſign now charged upon me, you ſee I have a tolerable chance of eſcaping, at leaſt all *private* reſentment.

But, Madame de Sevigné is alſo uneaſy about the conſequences of my *ſyſtem:* which apprehenſion, from the high opinion I have of her underſtanding, I am ſurprized at. By diſarming Cupid of his arrows, by conſidering love as an effect of conſtitution, vanity or caprice, by diſtinguiſhing the humble paſſion itſelf, from the metaphyſical dignity of it, have I not rendered it infinitely leſs dangerous to mankind, than it would be, if according to her *ſyſtem*, we ſhould *conſtellate* it among the virtues? In fine, you may compare me, if you pleaſe, to one of the antient legiſlators, who is reported to have leſſened the power of women over his citizens, by ſhewing them naked.

But

But I ſhall make a further effort in your favour; and ſince I am taken for a *Syſtematical* reaſoner, I ſhall not ſeem altogether unworthy of ſo flouriſhing a title. Let us for a while then, diſcuſs the point of galantry, with that method and philoſophy, which might become the moſt ſerious topic.

Is not love a paſſion? Do not your ſevere moraliſts affirm, that paſſions and vices are ſynonymous? Is vice ever more ſeducing, than when it aſſumes the character of virtue? It ought never therefore, to be ſuffered to appear, but under ſuch diſadvantages, as might alarm the chaſte mind. This however was not the deſign of the *Platoniſts*, when they ſo prophanely deified it. And in all ages, have they not endeavoured to authorize the paſſions, by involving them among the pagan hierarchy? Behold! I ſtep forth a reformer—I decry the popular ſuperſtition—I break the vain

vain idol —— but confeſs my raſhneſs at the ſame time, and muſt expect a female perſecution for attacking thus their favourite worſhip.

I own I am much concerned upon this account myſelf. They were rare times truly, when women might acknowledge their fond impreſſions, without a bluſh—nay, even boaſt their paſſion, and ſhield their *weakneſs* under the *ſtrength* of the deity. But, why muſt poor humanity be ſuperſeded? Why diſclaim its power, and ſearch in heaven for the cauſes of our foibles? Let us abide on earth, and imagine for them here—We ſhall find their dominion intirely below [4].

In

4 The ingenious author of the Dialogues of the Gods, in his preface, ſpeaking of the refinements of love, ſays, "I am not certain that morals have "gained much by the change.—They have rendered this paſſion more alluring by taking away "every

In reality, I have not in any of my letters, expreſsly declaimed againſt love, nor have I adviſed you to leave it out of your ſcheme of life. I know too well, the uſefulneſs of ſuch counſels. But I have let you into the true ſecret of the matter; by which I have leſſened the illuſion it might otherwiſe have led you into.—I have at leaſt, diminiſhed its influence over you, and every day's experience will ſupport my doctrines.

I know that they act very differently in the education of women: but what

" every appearance of vice from it. As it is " diſguiſed at preſent, we deliver ourſelves up to " the impreſſion, without a bluſh, and who dares " reproach us with a vice that has ſo much the " appearance of a virtue? Romances are full of " admirable ſentiments.—All manner of virtues " are there diſplayed.—The groſſneſs of love " is ſubtilized into delicacy, and the heroes and " heroines are certain pure intelligences, whoſe " bodies are but meerly *accidents*; which are by no " means inſtrumental to their pleaſures."

is the conſequence? They begin by deceiving them—poſſeſs them with as great a fear of love, as old nurſes do of ſprites. Men are repreſented to them as monſters of perfidy and infidelity. A handſome young fellow preſents himſelf: his ſentiments delicate; behaviour modeſt and reſpectful. The fair one, who has been educated in the manner abovementioned, will immediately conclude ſhe has been impoſed upon. She will find the ſentiments that this ſame *monſter* has excited in her breaſt, to be of a very different kind from thoſe of horror; and as ſoon as ſhe detects any exaggeration, her inſtructors will begin to forfeit all further credit with her.

They miſlead them alſo another way, and how can it well be avoided? They take infinite care not to let them know, or even ſuffer them to imagine, that that they ſhall be attacked by the ſenſes; and that theſe are the moſt dangerous

gerous enemies they will have to encounter. In ſhort, they ſpeak to them as if they were perfect angels. The conſequence of which is, that not having been properly warned of the nature of the attack, they may not be ſufficiently armed to ſuſtain it. How could they ever take it into their heads, of themſelves, that their moſt redoubted adverſary, ſhould be one that they had never once been cautioned againſt? And what ſort of *extempore* defence can they make upon the occaſion?

It is not then, the lover they ſhould have been forewarned of—it is themſelves.——For what avails the lover's *wiſhing*, without the fair-one's *willing?* So that, Marquis, when I acquaint my ſex, that their weakneſs lies in nature, I do not mean to encourage them to follow their inclinations; but on the contrary, to caution them againſt their greateſt danger. 'Tis like informing

the governor of a citadel, that he was defending himſelf in the wrong place, being in more hazard of being betrayed within, than conquered from without.

In fine, by rating at their juſt value thoſe ſentiments to which women have annexed ſuch ſublime ideas, and by making known the true intention, of even the moſt refined lovers, you may perceive, that I pique their vanity to be leſs ambitious of being beloved, and their hearts to receive leſs ſelf-approbation, in loving. And be aſſured that whenever we can oppoſe pride to pleaſure, ſome advantage will generally be gained, on the part of virtue.

I have had lovers myſelf; but they they never could impoſe on me. I well knew the whole ſcope of their addreſſes. —I was certain, that if my ſenſe or character had any ſhare in the motives which

which determined them to throw themſelves at my feet, it was meerly becauſe thoſe merits flattered their vanity. They loved me becauſe I was handſome, and they had deſires. For which reaſon they never obtained more than the ſecond place in my eſteem—the firſt being always occupied by my friends. For friendſhip I have ever preſerved that deference, that conſtancy and reſpect, which ſo noble a ſentiment deſerves—one ſo worthy of poſſeſſing the generous mind.—In a word, I have always conceived a diffidence of thoſe hearts, where love appeared to be the principal gueſt. This weakneſs degraded them in my eyes; and I regarded thoſe perſons as incapable of exalting their ſouls to ſentiments of true eſteem, toward a woman whom they had principally wiſhed to enjoy.

You ſee then, Marquis, that the conſequences to be drawn from my pre-

miſſes, are by no means dangerous. All that can be ſaid to me by perſons of of any ſenſe, is, that I have taken a great deal of idle pains to prove to you a propoſition, that was obvious enough before. But your inexperience and curioſity muſt be my apology, for what I have written, or may hereafter ſay to you, upon this ſubject.

Farewel.

The END of the Firſt PART.

THE

THE

LETTERS

OF

Mademoiſelle Ninon de l'Enclos

TO THE

Marquis de Sevigné.

PART II.

LETTER XXVIII.

YOU are certainly right, Marquis.—The taſte and talent that the Counteſs has for muſic, will bring a great addition both to your love and happineſs. I have frequently told women, the infinite advantages they might reap, from the due improvement and exerciſe of their accompliſhments. There are

very few occaſions, upon which they would not be ſerviceable to them.

Women generally imagine, that they have nothing to fear but the preſence of the lover. True indeed, that they may have then, two enemies to contend with, at a time; their paſſion, and the party. But when the lover has retired, the love ſtill remains; and the progreſs it makes in ſolitude, though leſs perceivable, is not the leſs dangerous. At ſuch intervals as theſe, the playing on a harpſichord, painting a flower, or reading ſome work of genius, may turn aſide the thoughts from ideas too alluring, and fix the attention upon ſafer objects. All theſe occupations then, which employ the mind, are ſo many *countermines* to temptation [1].

A lover

[1] Shakeſpear has a fine poetical moral, upon this ſubject, in his *Midſummer Night's Dream*.
" Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell.—
" It was upon a little weſtern flower,
" Before milk-white--now purple with love's wound;
" And maidens call it *Love in idleneſs*."

A lover has an opportunity of entertaining his miſtreſs apart: ſhe has beauty and good-humour only: what can he do with her? how amuſe himſelf, without ſenſe or vanity? Love is active; 'tis a voracious flame, and ſtill demands freſh fuel. If it has nothing but objects of ſenſe, to exerciſe itſelf upon, it muſt lay hold on thoſe, and make the beſt of them. In ſhort, if the *mind* be not employed, the *ſenſes* will. He is reduced to the neceſſity of *dumb-ſhew*, and of explaining his paſſion in the leaſt equivocal manner, to a perſon who is not capable of underſtanding a more delicate language.

It is not meerly by reſiſtleſs attempts, or reſenting freedoms, that women can expect to preſerve their virtue. When they ſuffer themſelves to be attacked, after ſuch a manner, their very defence alarms the ſenſes; the emotions of reſiſtance hazard their defeat; and they

are yielding, even in the conflict. But 'tis by preſenting other and various objects, to the lovers attention, that they may beſt evade ſuch enterprizes; the mortification and danger of which, I am ſorry to ſay, they have themſelves moſtly to charge with: for 'tis almoſt certain, that men rarely make attempts, except where indiſcretions have given the encouragement.

There is no man of any education, or knowledge of the world, but can eaſily judge to what degree of freedom he may venture to extend his behaviour. For which reaſon, I have never attended to women, who have complained to me of a lover's rudeneſs. Upon examination, I have generally found that ſome imprudent or inconſiderate conduct of theirs, firſt gave occaſion to it. Women have no other way left, of *begging the queſtion.*

But indeed our want of ſenſe or education

cation may, as I hinted before, ſubject us, equally with our indiſcretions, to the ſame misfortune. For, with a woman who has neither wit or accompliſhment, what can a man do, but *enterprize?* He has no other way to rid his time of her, but to romp or teaze. He cannot pretend to introduce any other topic of converſation, except her beauty, with the deep impreſſion it has made upon his ſenſes; and one muſt uſe the language of the ſenſes, to expreſs their effect. Nay, how can ſhe ſeem convinced of your paſſion, declare her ſympathy, or return your flame, but by the ſenſes alone? by ſhewing her emotions equal to your own? or at beſt, her expiring chaſtity has nothing left to oppoſe, but peeviſhneſs only—the laſt reſource of a ſilly woman: and a wretched one it is!

What advantage, on the contrary, has a woman of addreſs and ſpirit? A lively repar-

repartée, a diſconcerting raillery, a quick reſentment, an apt quotation, or an applicable ſtory, are not theſe ſo many *diverſions* in her favour, and ſo much good time gained on the ſide of virtue?

Women's chief misfortune is certainly this; their not having been rendered capable of occupying their minds with objects worthy their attention; which renders love a more violent paſſion in their breaſts, than it uſually is among men. But they poſſeſs at the ſame time a lucky ſentiment, which under proper direction, is of admirable ſervice to them. Their vanity is at leaſt equal to their ſenſibility. Oppoſe one to the other. While a woman is taken up with the ambition of pleaſing, otherwiſe than by her perſon, ſhe for the time, attends not to the very ſentiment that has excited her deſire to charm.—In reality, this ſame ſentiment will nevertheleſs, continue to be the *determining motive*, if

I may

I may uſe a term of ſcience, but it will ceaſe to be the preſent and immediate object of her paſſion; which let me aſſure you, is a great point gained. Intirely occupied in acquiring that kind of eminence ſhe has ſet her heart upon, this very aim, though guided by love itſelf, will turn againſt it, by dividing the attention of the mind, and the affections of the heart.—This is perplexing the enemy, by preſenting two objects of operation, at once.

You will tell me perhaps, that according to this reaſoning, women of wit and talents ſhould be looked upon as impregnable; and that men naturally hating trouble, ſhould avoid ſuch purſuits. And yet, you'll add, that the ſtupid, as well as the ſenſible, equally addreſs ſuch women.—'Tis very true.—But the true reaſon alſo is, that blockheads know not the difficulty, and that men of ſpirit love to ſurmount it.

Beſides,

Beſides, you are a military man, Marquis, and ought you not to agree with my maxim, about talents? Suppoſe you ſhould obtain the conduct of a ſiege, on the approaching campaign, would you be pleaſed that the governor, from an opinion that the town was not tenable, ſhould ſurrender, before you could have any opportunity of ſignalizing yourſelf? I know you would not. You would have him hold out. The more care he takes of his own glory, the higher he raiſes yours.

In love, as well as war, the pleaſure of conqueſt is meaſured by the difficulty. Shall I ſpeak out? I am tempted to carry the parallel farther. This is the danger of entering into ſuch ſubjects. The true merit of a woman, conſiſts perhaps leſs, in not yielding at all, than in making ſuch a defence, as may intitle her to the honours of war.

To proceed. If a woman has had the misfortune to be overcome, what fetters can ſhe forge, to bind the ſucceſsful lover, if ſhe be deficient in ſenſe or talents! I acknowledge indeed, that female education is not over rich in theſe endowments. Yet, if you conſider the matter a little, you'll agree, that there is hardly any woman, who with proper application of time and common ſenſe, might not procure ſome one or more of thoſe advantages: the difference lying only, in the more or leſs.

But we are naturally too indolent for ſuch ſpirited efforts. We find beauty to be an univerſal merit. This method of winning hearts, requires no manner of trouble, and we could wiſh there were no other. Blind that we are! we never conſider that though beauty and talents equally gain admirers; the firſt endangers the poſſeſſor, while the latter ſerves for their defence.

In reality, beauty prepares but mortification and regret, againſt the quick period of its decay. Would you know the reaſon? becauſe it has betrayed us into a neglect of more permanent attractions. During its frail empire, we find ourſelves prized, ſought, and celebrated. We hold our court. Our ſhort ſight foreſees no end of admiration.—But, oh! the ſolitude horrible, when age or accident ſhall have wreſted from us, the poor, the only ſtay of our dominion! I could wiſh then, (the alluſion is not elegant, but it will expreſs my ſenſe) that beauty ſerved only as a *ſign*, to declare the *entertainment* within.

Let us conclude therefore, Marquis, that in love, ſenſe and talents are of the higheſt conſequence. This is a *comedy*, in which the *acts* are the ſhorteſt, and the *interludes* the longeſt of any. How ſhall we amuſe the intervals of dalliance,

liance, without the reſources of the underſtanding? Poſſeſſion places all women on a level, and ſubjects them equally to your inconſtancy. The beautiful have in this particular, but little advantage over the homely. Senſe and accompliſhments make the chief difference between them. Theſe alone ſupply that charming variety, in love and life, which relieves from tedioufneſs and diſguſt.

In fine, nothing but the improvement of the underſtanding, can repleniſh that irkſome void in the heart, which is conſequent upon a paſſion gratified.—Nor is there any thing which can poſſibly be more ſerviceable to us, in whatever ſituation we mayhappen to be circumſtanced; whether in retarding our defeat, in rendering it more richly prized, or in aſſiſting us to regain our empire. Even our lovers reap advantage from them. How many accompliſhments ſhould they encourage in us, though they turn

at firſt, againſt themſelves? Thus the Counteſs by cultivating her excellent talent for muſic, acts equally agreeable both to your intereſt and her own.

I have read over my letter, dear Marquis, and am afraid you will think it too grave and philoſophic. This is the conſequence of bad company. I ſupped laſt night with Monſieur de la Rochefaucault, and I never part from him, without being infected after this manner, for a day or two, at leaſt.

Adieu.

LETTER XXIX.

I Agree with you, Marquis, that the Counteſs puniſhes you too ſeverely, for the confeſſion you have ſurprized her into. Is it your fault that ſhe could not preſerve her own ſecret? She has, however, advanced too far for a retreat now. We will indulge her in a few mortifying

fying reflections on the occaſion; but to carry it ſo far as to refuſe your viſits for three days, to direct them to tell you that ſhe was retiring into the country for a month, and to return your tender billets with unbroken ſeals, is in my opinion, a very caprice of virtue. But after all, prithee deſpair not. If ſhe was really indifferent, truſt me, ſhe would be leſs ſevere.

Do not miſtake the matter—upon ſuch occaſions, women are leſs out of humour with the lover than themſelves. They are mortified to find their weakneſs is ready to betray them every moment: they therefore, puniſh you, and conſequently themſelves, at the ſame time, by an affected reſerve. But be aſſured that one day's caprice of this ſort, advances more the lover's ſucceſs, than a whole year of his own aſſiduity. The generous fair one ſoon begins to reproach herſelf, for the diſingenuouſneſs

of

of her behaviour, ſhe quickly perceives the injuſtice of her conduct, ſhe would make reparation for it, and ruſhes unawares, into the contrary extreme.

I am ſurprized at that part of your letter, where you ſay, that ſince the Counteſs has appeared to love you, her character has been intirely changed. The cauſe of this alteration, I am quite unacquainted with. All I know is, that ſhe has of late preſented herſelf to the world, a perfect *Lady Townly*; and ſo gay a life has been the more remarkable, as her conduct was the very reverſe, while her huſband lived. You remember when you were firſt acquainted with her, that ſhe was lively, even to exceſs; heedleſs, haughty, coquettiſh; and appeared perfectly incapable of a ſerious attachment. And you tell me now, that ſhe is become grave and reſerved: that ſhe ſeems to be abſent, timid and obliging: ſentiment has ſucceeded to diſſipation,

pation, and natural manners have taken the place of affected ones. In fine, ſhe appears to enter ſo well into her preſent character, that you conclude it to be her real one; and that the former, was but a borrowed part.

All this would certainly puzzle my philoſophy, if I could not account for the metamorphoſe, as an effect of love. I am much miſtaken, if the oppoſition you meet with at preſent, be not an earneſt of the moſt complete victory to you; which is the more aſſured, becauſe ſhe has taken every meaſure in her power, to diſpute it with you.

If you ſtill keep your object in view, if you ſuffer no time or place to eſcape you, ſo as that ſhe may remark the aſſiduity of your regards—if you refrain from urging, for a while, your paſſion, preſerving at the ſame time, an attentive,

tive, reſpectful, but enamoured air, what muſt be the conſequence? She cannot withhold from you that regard which one is naturally inclined to pay, in ſuch circumſtances, even to a perſon one is indifferent to. Women beſides, have an inexhauſtible fund of kindneſs, for thoſe who love them; which you men are perfectly well apprized of; and 'tis this that keeps up your ſpirits, when we appear to uſe you ill. You know that your preſence, your aſſiduities, and the dejected air you aſſume, have their effect, and conquer at length our diſdain. You conclude, that thoſe whom our virtue keeps at the greateſt diſtance, are certainly thoſe, who alarm it the moſt.—And unluckily, your ſentiment is but too juſt.

Our prudence keeps us aloof, where we apprehend the engagement may be to our diſadvantage: we do ſometimes more, even brave the enemy, whoſe attack

tack we dare not wait for. In a word, the courage of a woman is always capable of a firſt effort; but rarely repeats it. The very exceſs of its violence, is often the cauſe of its ſubſiding too ſoon. The mind has but a certain degree of ſtrength, and when that is exhauſted by its own exertion, it naturally ſinks into indolence; and the apprehenſion of its own weakneſs, diſcourages it from any further activity. A perſon may ſupport the firſt onſet of an enemy, with reſolution, whom the experienced difficulty may deter, on the ſecond.

A woman, perſuaded that ſhe has tried every thing in her power, to defend herſelf from a paſſion which inthralls her, and ſatisfied with the conflicts ſhe has already ſuſtained, begins ſoon to conclude, that all further reſiſtance againſt the force of love, muſt be in vain; and if ſhe ſtill holds out,

it

it is not from any reſource, yet remaining within herſelf: her ſecurity ariſes from the opinion of her chaſtity, with which ſhe has inſpired the lover, and the deſpair which her long reſiſtance may have poſſeſſed him with

So that every prudent woman ſhould begin with making a good defence; and pride alone is ſufficient to ſpirit them up to this. But unhappily, ye foreſee the means of conqueſt.—Perſevere, and they are not impregnable.—And ye are ſo ſhamefully indelicate, that provided ye obtain the prize, ye remain indifferent, whether your ſucceſs be owing to importunity, or free conſent.

In fine, Marquis, the extreme precaution the Counteſs uſes againſt you, proves ſufficiently your power over her. Were you an object indifferent to her, would ſhe take ſuch pains to fly you?

I promiſe you ſhe would not pay you ſo great a compliment. But lovers are unaccountable creatures.—Always ingenious to torment themſelves, the habit of occupying the mind with one dear object only, is ſo ſtrong in them, that they would rather think of it diſagreeably, than not at all.

However, I have great compaſſion for you. Smitten as you are, your ſituation is moſt dolorous. My poor Marquis, how they uſe it!

Adieu.

LETTER XXX.

I AM pleaſed at finding, before I ſet out for the country, that you begin to appear ſomewhat more tranquil in your mind. I frankly confeſs, that if the Counteſs had perſevered in her ſeverity, I ſhould have imagined, not that ſhe was inſenſible, but that ſome more

lucky rival had intervened. Such a reſiſtance would have appeared beyond the power of reaſon, ſuppoſing her to have ſuſtained the ſiege alone: for be aſſured, Marquis, that a woman is never more untractable, than when the diſdain ſhe manifeſts to other admirers, ariſes from the particular attachment ſhe may have towards a favoured lover.

What you tell me however, convinces me that you are beloved, and that you alone are ſo. I ſhall ſoon be able to give you certain and conſtant accounts of this matter, for I am reſolved to examine the Counteſs in perſon, myſelf. This declaration doubtleſs ſurprizes you; but your aſtoniſhment will ceaſe, when I tell you, that Madame de la Sabliere's villa, whither I am going to ſpend a week, joins the eſtate of your amiable widow; and you inform me that ſhe has already ſet

out

out for the country. Add our vicinity to the extreme deſire I have to be acquainted with her, and you will no longer be ſurprized, at the promiſe I have now made you.

They will not give me time to finiſh my letter, nor even to ſend it. I muſt ſet out, this inſtant.—My fellow-traveller raillies me, and fancies I am penning a billet-doux.—I let her amuſe herſelf, but ſhall carry this letter with me, to finiſh in the country.

Adieu.

P. S. It ſeems then, that Madame de Grignan's illneſs is to prevent your paying us a viſit in our retirement!

From the Chateau de- - - - - -

I write to you from the Counteſs's, my dear Marquis.—This is the third day I have paſſed here. You may judge from this, that I am on good terms with

your beloved fair. She is really a amiable woman: I am quite charmed with her. I ſometimes doubt whether you deſerve to poſſeſs ſuch a heart as hers. Behold me now, her choſen confidante.—She has told me all her ſentiments of you, and I do not deſpair of being able to diſcover the motives of that inconſiſtency, which you have remarked in her character, before I return to Paris.

I dare not ſay more to you, at preſent.—I may be ſurprized while I am writing; and I would not have it even ſuſpected, that I correſpond with you from hence.

In haſte, Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

I Have ſomething to tell you, Marquis, worth attending to. I was reſolved to keep my word with you, and while I was framing my addreſs in order to extract the ſecret from the Counteſs, a lucky chance ſaved me any farther trouble. You know the confidence ſhe places in Monſieur de la Sabliere. She was juſt now with him in one of the arbours of her garden: I croſſed a parterre to join them, and was near the door when I heard your name mentioned. I ſtopt ſhort, and was not perceived: I overheard every word, and am now retired to give you a literal account of the whole converſation.

" I have not been able it ſeems, ſaid " ſhe, to hide from your penetration, " my regards for the Marquis de Se- " vigné; and you cannot reconcile the

" ſerioufneſs of a ſettled paſſion, with
" the livelineſs of my former character.
" But you will be much more aſtoniſh-
" ed, when I inform you that my exte-
" rior behaviour marks not my true
" character; that the gravity which ſur-
" prizes you at preſent, is but a recur-
" rence to my real ſelf; and in a word,
" that I have only aſſumed the appear-
" ance of a *fine lady*, through deſign.

" Perhaps you may imagine, that
" women can diſguiſe only their imper-
" fections; but they ſometimes carry
" it farther, Sir, of which I am myſelf
" one example: they can diſguiſe even
" their virtues! And ſince I have en-
" tered upon it, I am tempted, at the
" hazard of tiring your patience, to ac-
" quaint you with the ſingular proceſs,
" which conducted me to this point.

" During my huſband's life, I lived
" intirely in the country. You knew
" the

" the Count, and his love of retirement.
" Upon his death, I thought it proper to
" come a little into the world, but was
" for ſome time embarraſſed about the
" fitteſt character for me to appear in.
" I examined myſelf cloſely.—There is
" no equivocating with one's ſelf.—
" I found my love of ſocial pleaſures
" ſtrong; but governed at the ſame time
" by a firm reſolve, to preſerve a pure-
" neſs of moral throughout. How
" to blend theſe happily together, be-
" came then the queſtion. It appeared
" to me an extreme difficulty, to frame
" any ſyſtem of conduct, that without
" laying me open to the cenſure of the
" world, on one hand, ſhould not de-
" prive me of its moſt flattering plea-
" ſures, on the other.

" I reaſoned with myſelf thus. De-
" ſtined to aſſociate among men, form-
" ed to pleaſe them, and partake a mu-
" tual happineſs together, we muſt ex-

" pect to ſuffer likewiſe from their
" faults; and the one we have chiefly
" to reproach them with, is their un-
" generous calumny. One would ima-
" gine that the whole ſcheme of our
" education, was to render us compleat
" objects of love; and in truth, this is
" the only paſſion which is permitted
" us: yet, by a moſt unaccountable
" and ſevere contradiction, they leave
" us a right to but one ſort of fame,
" which is that of reſiſting all the im-
" pulſes of this very paſſion. I delibe-
" rated then with myſelf, about the beſt
" meaſures for accommodating my con-
" duct to ſuch oppoſite extremes, at
" the ſame time; and found myſelf ſur-
" rounded by difficulties on all ſides.

" We are ſimple enough, thought I,
" on our firſt entrance into life, to con-
" ceive the higheſt felicity to conſiſt in
" mutual love: we then ſuppoſe this
" paſſion to be founded on eſteem, ſuf-

" tained

" tained by the acknowledgment of
" every amiable quality, refined by
" the moſt perfect delicacy of ſenti-
" ment, unſullied by the leaſt idea
" *unſeraphic* ; and finally, corroborated
" by the reciprocal confidence, and un-
" reſtrained overflowings of two fond,
" chaſte and faithful hearts, now melt-
" ed into one. But unfortunately, this
" image, ſo flattering for our ſex, flits
" from us like an *Utopian* dream,
" whene'er we try to fold it in our em-
" brace. We are *ſoon* undeceived—
" and yet generally too *late*.

" At my firſt obſervations on men,
" I was child enough to be equally
" ſcandalized at their inconſtancy and
" treachery : but upon reflection, one
" muſt agree, that the firſt of theſe, is
" rather an *imperfection*, than a *fault*,
" and renders themſelves more *unhap-*
" *py*, than *guilty*. When 'tis conſider-
" ed of what ſtuff their hearts are made,

" one cannot expect that firſt impreſ-
" ſions ſhall preclude all future forms.
" But, are we to grant the ſame indul-
" gence to their other vice? Moſt men
" attack us in cool blood, to make us
" ſerve for their amuſement, or to ſa-
" rifice us to their vanity;—to fill up
" the vacation of an idle life, or to at-
" chieve a ſort of character, at the un-
" generous expence of ours. The great-
" er number are of this kind; and
" how ſhall one be able to diſtinguiſh
" them from genuine lovers? Outward
" appearances are both the ſame; and
" he who *feigns* a paſſion, has odds
" againſt him who *feels* it.

" We are beſides, ſilly dupes enough
" to conſider love as our principal con-
" cern, while you men treat it as an
" amuſement only. We rarely yield
" our perſons without our hearts, while
" you are indelicate enough to make
" *deſire* ſupply the place of *paſſion*. We

" be-

" believe conſtancy to be a duty; you
" change upon the firſt diſguſt. You
" ſcarce preſerve decency in quitting a
" miſtreſs, the poſſeſſion of whom, ſix
" months before, conſtituted your chief
" happineſs and pride; while the for-
" ſaken fair one may not ill compound,
" if the faithleſs lover does not give
" her ſtill further reaſons to repent her
" confidence in him.

" Theſe reflections then, wrought
" up my mind to the moſt ſerious phi-
" loſophy, and I thus went on debat-
" ing. If love draws ſuch a train of
" evils after it, a woman who has any
" manner of eſteem for her reputation
" or repoſe, ſhould cancel this paſſion
" quite out of her ſcheme of life. But
" how to compound the matter with
" our hearts! Our hearts are formed
" for love, and love is itſelf, involun-
" tary! How then annihilate a paſſion
" interwoven with our nature? our ſole

" reſource

" reſource muſt be to regulate it. Let
" us deliberate upon the beſt means, of
" compaſſing ſo deſireable an end.

" What kind of love is moſt dan-
" gerous? Certainly that which occu-
" pies the ſoul intire, which ſwallows
" up all other paſſions, renders us inca-
" pable of any other ſentiment, and
" diſpoſes us to ſacrifice every thing
" to the object beloved.

" Which are the characters ſuſcep-
" tible of ſuch affections? Without
" doubt the moſt ſolid ones; thoſe of
" the leaſt outward ſhew; thoſe which
" unite together the beſt ſenſe with the
" nobleſt mind, and moſt elevated ſen-
" timent.

" What kind of men are the moſt
" formidable to a woman of this com-
" plexion? Thoſe who poſſeſs no other
" ſhining qualities but what are ſuffi-

" cient to place ſocial merit in its proper
" light[3]. Perſons of this ſtamp are al-
" ways dangerous company for a woman
" of thought and reflection. 'Tis true
" that they are very rare now-a-days,
" and that there never was, perhaps, an
" age more ſecure than the preſent, for
" defending us from the dominion of
" extraordinary paſſions. But ſome
" chance however, may unluckily throw
" ſuch an adventure in one's way.

" Moral philoſophers agree, that we
" every one of us are born with a cer-
" tain portion of ſenſibility, deſtined
" to be exerciſed upon ſome particular
" object or other.—Women of ſenſe
" are not to be won by any of thoſe

[3] The ſenſe of this paſſage does not occur at firſt reading; but the meaning appears to be, that the moſt brilliant qualities are not often the moſt amiable; and that thoſe, which without alarming, inſenſibly win upon the affections, have generally the ſureſt effect.

" trivial

" trivial accompliſhments, which cap-
" tivate the generality of their ſex. But
" when an object worthy of their at-
" tention, preſents itſelf, they quickly
" comprehend its intire merit. Their
" attachments are meaſured by the ex-
" tent of their underſtanding.—They
" are incapable of middling affections.
" We ſhould therefore keep clear of
" ſuch female characters as theſe, and
" likewiſe avoid the acquaintance and
" converſe of ſuch men, as I have juſt
" deſcribed, if we would conſult the
" eaſe of our hearts, and peace of our
" minds.

" How then to frame a ſyſtem of
" conduct which may procure us this
" two-fold advantage, at the ſame
" time,—to preſerve us from too deep
" impreſſions, and keep thoſe perſons
" at a diſtance, who are capable of in-
" ſpiring them? Let us aſſume ſuch
" an outward behaviour, as may at

" leaſt,

" leaſt, diſcourage men from exerting
" any of their moſt eſtimable qualities
" before us. Let us ſubject them to
" the mortifying neceſſity of attempt-
" ing to win us by trivial addreſs and
" drawing-room accompliſhments; the
" ridiculous affectation of which may
" ſerve to ſupply us with ſhields againſt
" their aſſaults. What kind of in-
" trenchment may we throw ourſelves
" into, in order to ſtand covered by ſo
" many bulwarks? Even the ſhallow
" province of a *fine lady*.

" You muſt be doubtleſs ſurprized,
" at the ſingular reſult of ſuch philo-
" ſophic reaſonings; but you will be
" much more ſo, when you ſhall hear
" me argue in form, to prove the juſt-
" neſs of this reſolve. Lend your ears
" a little longer patience.—I know the
" excellence of your judgment, nor do
" I think myſelf quite deficient in un-
" derſtanding,

" derſtanding, notwithſtanding the fri-
" volous character I have for ſome time
" ſuſtained; and by the time I ſhall
" have finiſhed my harangue, I flatter
" myſelf that we may both be of ac-
" cord, upon this topic.

" Do you imagine that an outward
" ſeverity of manners can defend the
" heart from its foibles? Wretched
" reſource! When a woman once be-
" comes a victim to her weakneſs, ſhe
" muſt be only the more humbled, in
" proportion to the character ſhe had
" before attempted to impoſe upon the
" world. The higher pride ſhe had
" placed in her virtue, the greater
" advantage ſhe affords to malicious
" cenſure.

" What ideas beſides, do the world
" generally form of a virtuous woman?
" Are not men diſingenuous enough

" to

" to imagine, that the chaſteſt wo-
" man is ſhe who can beſt conceal
" her weakneſs; or by a forced retreat
" puts it out of her power to fall a
" ſacrifice to it? They carry ſtill their
" want of charity farther, ſo much
" afraid are they of admitting the leaſt
" kind of perfection in us, even to ſup-
" poſe that we continue in a ſtate of
" conſtant warfare with ourſelves, while
" we maintain any manner of ſtruggle
" with them. There never was a mo-
" deſt woman, ſays a certain friend of
" ours[4], who was not weary of her
" condition.

" And after all, what præmium is
" the reward of thoſe ſelf-denials they
" ſuppoſe we condemn ourſelves to?
" Do they raiſe altars to ſuch heroic
" efforts? Not a ſingle ſod! The beſt
" character, according to them, is that

[4] Rochefaucault.

" which

" which paſſes through life unnoticed *.
" That is, a perfect indifference on their
" part, and a profound oblivion, is the
" higheſt price the world ſets upon our
" virtue. Muſt we not have an in-
" exhauſtible ſtock, to preſerve it upon
" ſuch conditions? Might not ſuch
" hard meaſure tempt one to decline
" the conflict? But there are ſome
" ſerious conſiderations, which demand
" our attention.

" Diſhonour treads cloſe upon the
" heels of frailty. Age is wretched
" enough in itſelf.—What a ſtate then,
" muſt it be, when paſſed in infamy
" and remorſe! What price too high
" for an exemption? At firſt thought,

* Pope ſays.
" Moſt women have no characters at all."—
" Matter too ſoft, a laſting mark to bear;
" And beſt diſtinguiſh'd by black, brown, or fair."

Young alſo,
" Their higheſt praiſe, to live and die unknown."

" I con-

" I concluded that there was no other " ſecurity from theſe ills, but by con- " demning one's ſelf to a retired and " auſtere life, and I did not perceive my " philoſophy ſturdy enough to encoun- " ter it. But upon farther conſideration, " I determined within myſelf, that the " maſque of a *fine lady* would be the " beſt dreſs for a woman to appear in, " who would reconcile pleaſure and " virtue together. By your ſmiling, " I perceive that you look upon my " propoſition as a paradox; but be- " lieve me there is more conſiſtency in " it than one might at firſt imagine.

" Is a *fine lady* required to have any " attachment? Does any one expect " tenderneſs or ſenſibility from her? " 'Tis ſufficient if ſhe be but agreeable, " and accompliſhed in mere outward " demeanour. If ſhe carries herſelf " with gayety and ſpirit, through the " character ſhe has taken upon her to

" perſonate,

" perſonate, who troubles themſelves
" whether ſhe has a heart or no? Per-
" ſon, air, caprice, faſhionable chat,
" frolic and particular whims, are the
" only things expected from her. She
" may be as virtuous as ſhe pleaſes,
" without interruption. Suppoſe a man
" ſhould take it into his head to attack
" her; a ſlight reſiſtance would quick-
" ly make him *raiſe the ſiege:* he would
" conclude the place to be already won,
" and wait patiently his turn. His
" perſeverance might rather hurt him;
" it would betray an ignorance of the
" deference due to meaſures taken be-
" fore his ſummons; ſo that after an
" extraordinary manner, ſhe may owe
" her ſafety, merely to the ill opinion
" that is conceived of her.

" I perceive by your countenance
" what you are going to ſay,—That the
" character of a *fine lady* might injure
" my reputation, and leave me ſubject

" to

" to thoſe very inconveniences I would
" avoid. Is not this your objection?
" But, don't you know, Sir, that the
" moſt ſtrict conduct may not be ſuf-
" ficient to ſcreen us from malice or
" ſlander? Men are generally the ar-
" biters of our fame; and the good
" as well as bad opinions they frame of
" us, are often equally falſe. Prejudice
" or accident determine their judg-
" ments; and our credit depends fre-
" quently, leſs upon real merit, than
" on the luckineſs of circumſtances.
" The hope of obtaining an honourable
" rank then, in their heraldry, ſhould
" be the leaſt part of our incitement
" to a virtuous life: our firſt induce-
" ment ought to be, the ſtanding well
" with our own minds, and to be able
" to ſay to one's ſelf, *Whatever may be*
" *the opinion of the world, I have, thank*
" *heaven, nothing to reproach my own*
" *heart with.* But after all, virtue is

" *the*

" *the one thing needful*, and the motives
" are very little material.

" I remained convinced then, upon the
" whole, that I could not conduct my-
" ſelf more prudently, on ſetting out
" in the world, than by putting on the
" vizard which I had deemed fitteſt,
" both for my ſafety and repoſe. I
" attached myſelf more cloſely, to the
" friend who had aſſiſted me with her
" counſels. This was the Marchioneſs
" de ------, my relation. Our
" conformity of ſentiments and man-
" ners, was perfect; we frequented the
" ſame company: charity for our
" neighbour was not in truth; our fa-
" vourite virtue. We entered the circle
" as the ſole maſkers at a ball; we
" trifled away our time there, and led
" others into the rendering themſelves
" ridiculous; and after we had ſuffi-
" ciently amuſed ourſelves with this
" farce,

" farce, our entertainment did not end
" here; it was renewed again, when
" we retired together, to our dear *tête*
" *à tête.* How filly the women ap-
" peared, and what empty creatures
" the men! What fopperies, what
" impertinencies! If perchance, among
" the crowd, we happened to *detect* a
" perſon capable of making himſelf
" feared—that is, eſteemed—we diſ-
" concerted him by our airs, by the
" ſlight notice we affected to take of
" him, and by the preference we ſeemed
" to give to thoſe who merited it the
" leaſt. In fine, in order to preſerve
" our happy inſenſibility, we made
" conſtant choice of the moſt inſigni-
" ficant company we could pick up.

" This conduct preſerved us for a
" long time, from the dangerous ſhoals
" of love, and relieved us alſo, from
" that irkſome tediouſneſs of life,
" which a more formal and puritani-
" cal

" cal virtue would have ſubjected us " to. Trifling, heedleſs, volatile—you " may add coquettiſh, if you will, be- " fore the world; but ſerious, rational " and virtuous in our own eyes, we " compounded with ourſelves for our " outward character. The generality " of men we met with, were not much " to be apprehended, and thoſe who " gave us the leaſt alarm, were obliged " to play the fool, to be admitted or " accepted of in our ſociety.

" However, there has at length " happened an adventure, which has " brought me to ſuſpect the ſufficiency " of my ſcheme of conduct; for I " find that it has not been able intirely " to guard me from the danger I ſought " to ſhun. My own experience has " convinced me, that love is an in- " vader, who by ſurrounding us on all " ſides, is ſure to find ſome unguarded " poſt to make his entrance at: I

" know

" know not by what deſtiny the Mar-
" quis de Sevigné has rendered all my
" projects fruitleſs: In ſpite of all my
" outguards, he has ſurprized the ave-
" nues of my heart. Whatever re-
" ſources I have ſummoned to my aid,
" he has had the fortune to win over
" to his party, and my reaſon, inſtead
" of aſſiſting me in the conflict, has
" but betrayed me to the victor.

" I ſhall not, however, repine at his
" conqueſt, if he ſhould not give me
" other cauſe to lament it. He has
" won upon my weakneſs ſo far, that
" I have not been able to conceal my
" ſentiments from him; and the only
" concern I have at preſent, is leſt
" he ſhould imagine that I have
" not hitherto, *perſonated* an inſig-
" nificant character, but *performed* a
" real one. And though my throw-
" ing off this diſguiſe, may perhaps
" render me leſs amiable in his eyes,—

" for I do affirm, that ſuperficial qua-
" lities generally captivate men more
" than ſolid ones,—I would however,
" reveal myſelf to him in my genuine
" character: For, I ſhould bluſh to
" owe his affections to mock appear-
" ances, belying both my heart, mind
" and underſtanding.

" I am, Madam, replied Monſieur
" de la Sabliere, ſtill leſs ſurprized at
" the novelties of your project, than at
" the addreſs with which you have been
" able to render ſo ſingular a notion
" plauſible. I really think that it is
" impoſſible to ramble with more me-
" thod. But you have not met with
" the general fate of projectors, who
" take round-about ways to avoid the
" beaten track, yet fall into the ſame
" inconveniences often, with the com-
" mon high-road traveller. Now to
" make uſe of the privilege you have
" allowed me, of ſpeaking my opinion
" freely,

" freely, believe me Madam, that the
" beſt means of inſuring your repoſe,
" is ever to act up, without diſguiſe,
" to the character of a rational crea-
" ture. One is always ſure to be a
" gainer, upon any manner of com-
" poſition with virtue."

When I perceived the converſation begin to take this ſerious turn, I apprehended that it might be drawing toward a concluſion; and therefore haſtily retired without being detected, and have given myſelf the pleaſure of ſatisfying your curioſity, according to promiſe.

Did you ever ſee ſo long a letter? We ſhall return to Paris, in two days.

Adieu.

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LETTER XXXII.

WELL Marquis, we are returned again, at laſt; but the *advices* we bring you, will be very far from welcome. You never in your life had a fairer occaſion of accuſing women of caprice. My laſt letter was to aſſure you that we loved you mightily; and the preſent is to inform you of the contrary. We have taken ſtrange reſolutions againſt you. Tremble—for it is a point determined.

The Counteſs in ſhort, is reſolved to love you for the future, intirely at her eaſe, and without the leaſt expence to her reputation or repoſe. She has foreſeen the conſequences of ſuch a flame as yours, and cannot reflect upon them without terror. She has therefore, taken the pious reſolution of arreſting its further progreſs. Let not the proofs ſhe has

has indiſcreetly given you of her regards, flatter you with the leaſt manner of hope. You men imagine that after a woman has once confeſſed her paſſion, ſhe has loſt the power to break her chain. You deceive yourſelf in this. The Counteſs is more miſtreſs of herſelf in this particular, than perhaps you may imagine; and I own ingenuouſly, that to my friendly counſels ſhe is indebted for ſome part of her firmneſs.

You muſt reckon no longer upon my letters, and in truth you will not have much farther occaſion for them, toward helping you to a thorough knowledge of women. I begin to repent me, that I have ſupplied you with too many arms already, againſt them; without which, do you imagine you would ever have won the Counteſs? I confeſs that I have hitherto, judged too ſeverely of my ſex, and here offer up my palinade [6].

[6] A claſſical term for a recantation.

I am truly ſenſible of my *libel* at preſent. There are, I believe, among women, more real and eſſential virtue, than I had heretofore imagined. What depth of underſtanding! What a conſtellation of eſtimable qualities, is our charming friend poſſeſſed of! No Marquis, I could not withhold from her my tendereſt affections; and without the ſmalleſt regard to your intereſts, I have moſt cordially entered into the ſtrongeſt alliance with her, offenſive and defenſive, againſt you.

You may reſent my defection; but has not the confidence ſhe has repoſed in me, a right to claim the ſtricteſt fealty? I will not even conceal my treachery from you.—I have betrayed you ſo far, as really to apprize her of thoſe very advantages, you might poſſibly profit yourſelf of, from the ſecrets I have let you into, of the female breaſt.

" I perceive,

"I perceive, ſaid ſhe, how formidable "a lover is likely to be, who joined to "a perfect knowledge of the heart, "poſſeſſes at the ſame time, the engag- "ing talent of explaining and expreſ- "ſing his paſſion, with addreſs and ſen- "timent. What effect may he not "have, upon a woman who reflects "and diſcerns? I know it; 'tis by "the aſſiſtance of her very underſtand- "ing that he wins her. He has the "art to employ her own wit againſt "herſelf, to juſtify to her reaſon the "errors he is betraying her into.

"A miſtreſs beſides, thinks herſelf "bound to ſacrifices in proportion to "the merit of her lover. With an "ordinary one a weakneſs is a weak- "neſs; and we bluſh for it; but with "an extraordinary one, 'tis a tribute "due to his deſert; and is alſo a proof "of our own diſcernment.—It compli- "ments our taſte, and we are proud to

" own it. Thus by adding to our va-
" nity, what is lopped off from virtue,
" we become quite inſenſible to the
" lapſes of our own weakneſs." Theſe are at preſent, the cautious ſentiments of the Counteſs, and I perceive not the leaſt gleam of hope for you, dawning thro' them.

I acknowledge that it might have been better to have made theſe reflections between ourſelves, without letting you at all, into the ſecret; and this was truly our firſt reſolve. But could I act ſo diſingenuous a part, to operate underhand againſt you? Would not this have been the height of perfidy? Beſides, by ſo clandeſtine a proceeding, we might have betrayed ſome fear about the danger, and you ſee me have bravery enough to adviſe you of our very plan of defence. Come on then, Marquis; our expectation of the attack riſes even to impatience.—Would you learn

learn why? Becauſe we can now attend your march, without a pulſe-beat. Do not flatter yourſelf it is any longer, a tender miſtreſs you have to cope with.—This would be too weak an adverſary.—Such a courage is not much to be depended on. No—'tis me—a champion in cool blood, who thinks herſelf engaged in honour to ſupport the weaker efforts of her friend and ally.—Yes—I can pry into the ſecret foldings of your heart, ſpy out its ſiniſter aims, parry them, and render fruitleſs every artifice of your machinations. Accuſe me of treachery, if you will; but come to us this evening, and I will convince you of the perfect equity and impartiality of my conduct, throughout this whole affair.

While your inexperience needed to be informed, encouraged and ſuſtained, my zeal for your ſervice induced me to ſacrifice every thing to your intereſts.

The Counteſs had, as that time, every advantage on her ſide. The complexion of affairs is quite altered. All her pride, at preſent, is hardly ſufficient to defend her. Formerly ſhe had her own indifference, and what was ſtill ſafer, your bad addreſs, in her favour. You are now, a perfect maſter of galantry; while ſhe is ſcarcely miſtreſs of —— herſelf. In ſuch circumſtances, to have continued the war for you againſt her, betray the confidence ſhe had placed in me, refuſe her the ſuccour ſhe had a right to call for, if you have the leaſt ingenuouſneſs in you, would by your own confeſſion, have been a crying ſin. I would then, for the future, repair the miſchief I may have done in revealing our ſecrets, and initiating you into our myſteries.

I know not how it is, but I really feel ſuch a pleaſure in traverſing your amour in this place, that one would imagine

imagine I had undertaken it from ſome ſelf-intereſted view, of my own: but you know how far only, my pretenſions upon you extend. My ſentiments toward you ſhall ever continue the ſame; and on your part, I dare ſay that you are too candid, to ſuffer this activity for my friend, to diminiſh the leaſt of your eſteem for me. Adieu.—Fly to the Counteſs now, you have free leave.

LETTER XXXIII.

WHAT Marquis, a couple of women then, have frightened you! You deſpair at once, of ſucceſs, becauſe ſuch redoubted Amazons have taken arms againſt you? See, ſee him flying from the field! Who would have taken him for ſo poor a ſoldier!

However, I muſt confeſs, that the firmneſs of the Counteſs, did even aſtoniſh me.—I was really ſurprized at the reſolution

reſolution with which ſhe withſtood for a whole evening, your vows, your proteſtations, and moſt earneſt inſtances. For my part, I own, that I never beheld your addreſs and manners ſo engaging; and ſhe herſelf acknowledged to me ſince, that ſhe never found you ſo formidable before. But, I may venture to anſwer for her now, ſince her courage flinched not, on ſo perilous an occaſion. My reflections carry me farther. The eaſe with which ſhe ſupported her irony throughout, has almoſt brought me to ſuſpect, that her heart has been but ſlightly grazed: had ſhe been really wounded, ſhe could not probably, have preſerved ſo very cavalier an air.

In ſhort, I have amuſed myſelf this morning, with a whimſical thought; that it would be ridiculous enough, if while we are diverting ourſelves with your pains, you ſhould diſcover that your tender Adelaide had conceived but a middling

a middling degree of liking for you. What a ſtroke to your vanity! What reſentment at the diſappointment!—Though there are yielding fair enough to repair the loſs.—How often will your pique cry out, "What is the heart of "woman! Define the jilting compoſi-"tion who can."

But after all, let me aſſure you that I have ſome compaſſion for you, and if I ſhould find this matter having too deep an effect upon your mind, I cannot ſay what I may do to mitigate your misfortune. But I know your philoſophy. The firſt tranſports of reſentment over, you will ſoon perceive that the beſt card you have to play in this deſperate game, is to reſtrain your paſſion within the common bounds of friendſhip; which is a condition that we now moſt generouſly tender you. What a happy compoſition is here, when your diſmiſſal might have been abſolute!

However,

However, do not plume yourſelf too highly, upon this advantage.—You might not have received ſuch quarter, if we had any farther danger to apprehend from you.

Adieu Marquis.—The Counteſs, who is ſitting by my ſide, ſays many kind things of you. She was particularly pleaſed with the complaiſance of your late behaviour toward us. No longer to preſs an argument when two ladies appeared againſt you, was the very pink of courteſy, and politeneſs, truly. Such extreme delicacy muſt ſurely in the end, diſarm their oppoſition, and at length, excite their compaſſion. Hope;—this we have not yet prohibited you.

Poſtſcript, from the Counteſs.

Though it ſhould encourage the moſt flattering hopes in you, Marquis, I cannot reſiſt the temptation of adding a few

few lines, at the bottom of my friend's letter. I have not read it, but ſuſpect that I may be the ſubject of her epiſtle. I have a mind to give it you under my hand, that we ſhall paſs this day alone together. I would acquaint you alſo, that though I have but a ſlight regard for you, at preſent, I ſhall every day, endeavour to render it leſs. However, if you have courage enough left, to break in upon our tête à tête party, I give you fair warning, that your danger will be great; for they flatter me that I am infinitely handſomer to-day than you ever yet ſaw me; and I can aſſure you that I never in my life found ſo ſtrong a diſpoſition in myſelf, to uſe you abominably, as at this preſent writing.

In the mean time, Adieu.

LET-

LETTER XXXIV.

THIS buſineſs begins now, to be rather ſerious, Marquis.—I inſiſt upon an explication. Do you ſpeak ingenuouſly in your letter, by hinting that you imagine I have been actuated in this affair, through jealouſy only; and that I have endeavoured to interrupt your commerce with the Counteſs, merely to take ſome private advantage of the rupture?—You have either a very bad heart, or a moſt excellent head. The firſt, if you can poſſibly think me capable of ſuch a double-dealing; and the latter, if you have but urged this charge, to create ſuſpicion in my friend.

The alternative is equally injurious to me. The Counteſs has taken the matter ſeriouſly, and this embarraſſes me to the laſt degree. You are really too many

many for us.—You know the aſcendency you have over her heart, and could not poſſibly have exerted it in a ſurer manner, than by putting on the appearance of indifference. Not to deign an anſwer to my laſt letter, to fail the aſſignation we made you under our hands, to remain three days without ſeeing us; and then to write us ſuch a ſtiff, cold letter! I muſt acknowledge Marquis, that all this is of a conſummate politician,—'tis what is charactered under the common phraſe of *un coup de maître*.

And accordingly, the moſt complete ſucceſs has attended your hopes. The poor Counteſs! though ſhe withſtood your *warmth*, could not hold out againſt your *coldneſs*. The apprehenſion leſt this indifference might be real, has thrown her into the utmoſt inquietude. Come then, you Machiavel in love, come, and ſurvey the work you have made.

made. Come, and wipe off her falling tears.—Come, to triumph in your victory, and our defeat.

Gods! what is the moſt ſenſible woman in the world, when love has once taken poſſeſſion of her heart! Why are you not here, a witneſs to the upbraidings ſhe breathes out againſt me! For what cauſe, you'll ſay? Why truly, have had it ſeems, in the firſt place, an injurious diffidence of her virtue; and in the ſecond, a miſtaken notion of your pretenſions. I firſt ſuppoſed them criminal, and then took it into my head to puniſh you for them. I am ſevere, cruel, unjuſt, with many epithets more of the ſame kind, which ſhe has heaped upon me.

What emotion! Well, take my word for it, that this ſhall be the laſt ſtorm I ſhall ever ſuſtain for intermeddling between you; and let me here, moſt cordially

dially renounce the confidence you have, each of you, hitherto honoured me with. We adviſers truly, in ſuch caſes, ſtand a moſt admirable *lay* of it! They ſolely are charged with every thing diſagreeable in the quarrel, and the lovers enjoy the whole pleaſure of the reconciliation.

However, upon reflection, I think myſelf weak to have any manner of reſentment upon this occaſion. You are a couple of children, whoſe waywardneſs ought rather to amuſe me. I ſhould regard you each with a philoſophic eye, and continue ſtill my friendſhip to you both. Come hither then, immediately, and acquaint me if you acquieſce in this reſolve of mine. Come away, and drop the *petty tyrant*, for the preſent. Let us make peace, and frame a triple alliance together. My poor dear infants! One of them has ſuch innocent views, and the other ſo ſecure in virtue, that

to

to keep them any longer aſunder, would be a *cruelty*, founded on *injuſtice*.

Farewel.

LETTER XXXV.

I See plainly Marquis, that the only way to preſerve terms with women, even of the beſt underſtanding and virtue, is never to interfere in their love-affairs. I have taken my reſolution; and for the time to come, ſhall never mention your name to the Counteſs, unleſs ſhe wreſts it from me.—I hate altercation.—However, this reſolve ſhall not in the leaſt affect my ſentiments toward you, any more than the friendſhip I ſhall ever preſerve for her. But though I remain her ally, I ſhall make it no ſcruple to hold on my commerce with you, in the ſame free manner as uſual; and ſhall continue, ſince you preſs it, to give you my opinions, upon every circumſtance of life, you ſhall propoſe

to

to me: but upon this condition be it; that I may not be denied the liberty of laughing ſometimes, at your expence.

However, this privilege I cannot make uſe of at preſent; for if the Counteſs adheres to her reſolution, which is not to ſee you alone, I do not perceive that your affairs are likely to afford me much variety. She perfectly remembers what I uſed lately to tell her: ſhe knows her heart, and has reaſon to fear it. She muſt be a very imprudent woman indeed, who confides in her own forces, and dares expoſe herſelf without apprehenſion, to the ſollicitations of a man ſhe likes. Nothing is ſo dangerous as the preſence, as the approach of an object beloved. The emotion that animates, the warmth with which the intire perſon is, as it were kindled up, awake the ſenſes, inflame the mind, and excite deſires. I ſaid to the Counteſs, one day, that women may be com-

pared to an harpſichord, which tho' ever ſo well tuned, emits no ſound, 'till the maſter's hand begins to operate. Touch but the keys, and the tones reſpond. Finiſh the parallel, and deduce your conſequences.

But after all, what have you to complain of, my metaphyſical friend? *To behold the Counteſs, to hold tender converſe with her, to liſten to the ſoft melody of her voice, to render her little aſſiduities*[7]; to ſpin the thread of ſentiment to a hair, and to edify from her ſublime lectures upon virtue; do not theſe, Marquis, conſtitute your ſupreme felicity? Quit, quit to earthly ſouls, thoſe groveling deſires, which begin now to appear too plainly in you. To conſider you in your preſent ſtate, one would imagine that I was not much miſtaken, when I hinted, that even the moſt refined paſſion, was but a more delicate effect of the ſenſes.

[7] See Letter ix. firſt paragraph, the *Italics*.

Your

Your own experience has compelled you at length, into my ſentiments. I am not ſorry for it. I would have you mortified for your incredulity. Adieu.

P. S. The Chevalier your old rival, has reſented the diſdain of the Counteſs, by throwing himſelf at the feet of the Marchioneſs, her couſin. This choice is a rare encomium on his taſte. But they were formed for one another. I ſhall be curious enough to know how far this hopeful paſſion may be able to carry them.

LETTER XXXVI.

YOU imagine, Marquis, that I do not perceive all the irony of thoſe compliments you pretend to make me, on my *feigned* reconciliation, as I fancy you ſuppoſe it, with the Counteſs. But in reality, we had never fallen out. She ſoon

ſoon made an apology for ſome haſty reflections, imputed them all to love, and intreated me to continue ſtill, my friendly counſels to her.

" But my good lady, what end will " all my aſſiſtance anſwer, except to " prepare a farther triumph for our an- " tagoniſt! My opinion, in this *council* " *of war*, is for quitting the field: for " whatever confidence you may place " in your own ſtrength, flight only, " can inſure your ſafety."

She imagines truly, that ſhe has ſhewn an high inſtance of effort, in the laſt converſation ſhe held with you. But all women ſpeak to their lovers, after the ſame manner. — " I reſt ſatisfied " with your heart, they cry; your ſen- " timents and eſteem are all the aim " of my ambition. There are women, " I am afraid, indelicate enough to ac-

" cept

" cept moſt willingly, what I refuſe.
" For my part, I ſhall never envy them
" their prize." And ſo forth.

Take care Marquis, how you reject theſe refined notions, openly. To ſeem to ſupport their ſincerity upon ſuch occaſions, would be more than unpolite, it would be indiſcreet. You ſhould applaud and encourage their error, if you would profit of it. They would appear delicate, and inſenſible to every other pleaſure, but thoſe of ſentiment and intellect only. This is their ſyſtem;— this their very ſoul. Some certainly there are, who impoſe upon themſelves in theſe opinions; but in truth, the generality of them only endeavour to impoſe upon you.

But whatever may be their reaſon for equivocating upon theſe occaſions, is it not a very happy thing, that they take the trouble of deceiving you, after this

manner? What obligations ſhould you not acknowledge to them? They give a value by this means, to the ſlighteſt favours, which without this artifice, would bear no price. You ſhould admire our addreſs.—By pretending an indifference, toward what you call the pleaſures of love,—in carrying the affectation ſo far, as even to declare an averſion to them, we augment the merit thoſe ſacrifices we are ſuppoſed to make you. We thus render you grateful, for the very obligations we are ourſelves equally indebted to you for; and exact a tribute even from our conquerors. And ſince it has been decreed from the firſt, that we ſhould ſtill impoſe upon you, what acknowledgments do you owe us, for chuſing the moſt agreeable manner of doing ſo? We but *cheat* you to your *gain*; and multiply difficulties, only to increaſe your triumph. Anxieties and cares are but the purchaſe of your pleaſures. How flatter-

ing to your vanity a pretence to boaſt, "This fair one, ſo delicate of ſenti- "ment, ſo cold to all impreſſions of "ſenſe; ſo nice, ſo jealous of her "fame; now ſacrifices to me her re- "pugnance, her fears, and her pride. "My merit, my perſonal accompliſh- "ments, my addreſs, have won a for- "treſs, impregnable to all other aſſail- "ants. *Io triumphe! Io Pæan!* What "victory! What glory!"

But if women on their part acted ingenuouſly; were they as unguarded in declaring their ſentiments, as you are aſſiduous in penetrating them, you could not poſſibly make ſuch a vain boaſting to yourſelves. What flattering plea- ſures would be at once deſtroyed! You ought never therefore to impute this reſerve to them as a fault, from whence you reap ſuch happy advantages. Feign rather to be impoſed upon, nay aſſiſt in

the deceit, yourſelves: It will but heighten, and refine your pleaſures.

If the Counteſs ſhould happen to intercept this letter! what reproaches, what upbraidings ſhould I again ſuſtain!

Adieu.

LETTER XXXVII.

I Know well enough, that a man of your rank, eſpecially a young officer, is frequently tempted into bad company; and conſequently, may ſometimes be *arreſted in his courſe*, by ſome of thoſe *ſirens* you hint at in your letter [7]. However, notwithſtanding ſuch excuſe, you have not gueſſed amiſs; for I ſhould certainly have given you a ſevere lecture upon this occaſion, if I was not perſuaded that in the preſent ſituation of your heart, ſuch *Circe's*

[7] The Opera girls.

cannot

cannot have magic enough to detain you long in chains, from the ſole object of your conſtancy [8].

But the Counteſs reſents it, you tell me; and I am not at all ſurpriſed at her jealouſy; as it but confirms my general opinion of your *metaphyſical* females. You may judge from hence, the ſincerity of their profeſſions. Their reſentment is of a ſingular nature truly.—For after all, what do theſe low-bred minxes rob them of? They have not the leaſt idea of *ſentiment*, and the Counteſs, to be ſure, is nothing elſe, from top to toe.

Women are ſtrangely inconſiſtent with themſelves! They affect to deſpiſe theſe *mock-heroines*, but betray a certain fear, at the ſame time, that riſes above contempt [9]. And in reality, have they

[8] *Circe* was a ſorcereſs, who detained *Ulyſſes* in his courſe, on his return to *Penelope*.

[9] View them with ſcornful, yet with jealous eyes. Pope.

not reason to fear them? are you not better pleased with the familiarity of their converse, than with the company of women in higher life, where attention, respect, and strict decorum must be preserved? With the first, men are perfectly at their ease; they feel themselves in their natural state of freedom: with the latter, constrained, circumspect, and rehearsing as it were, a part, they never chuse to perform. From the characters I have had of some of these *familiars*, I imagine them very capable of rendering a man truant in some particulars, even to the woman he loves best in the world; but then this infidelity, if one may give it so harsh a name, is seldom carried farther, by a man of sense. They may excite a transient desire, but are incapable to fix a permanent passion.

These *dramatis personæ* might indeed, be dangerous society, had they either in their wit or manners, a fund sufficient

to

to entertain you in the progreſs, as much as they do on the commencement of their acquaintance. A little common-place chat, readineſs of addreſs, and ſuperficial breeding, take you in at firſt. Ye have not the leaſt delicacy! the freedom of their converſation, the livelineſs of their manners, even the irregularity of their conduct, bewitch ye for the time; a giddy, thoughtleſs tranſport poſſeſſes itſelf of your ſenſes; and thus ye dream whole hours away, as minutes.

But happily for you, they have ſeldom ſubſtance enough to ſupport a miſterial part: they generally want education and improvement, and conſequently ſoon run the courſe of their narrow circle. The ſame ſtories, the ſame conceits, and the ſame mimickries recur again; and one ſeldom laughs at the ſame jeſt twice, when ſome eſteem for the perſon does not ſupport the humour.

The Counteſs then, may be perfectly eaſy with regard to theſe galantries. I know you well enough to be anſwerable for it, that ſuch miſtreſſes can never be able to rival her. But, there are a certain ſort of women, that may be truly dangerous to you, namely your ladies of clandeſtine galantry. Theſe are a kind of equivocal claſs in life, who hold a middle rank between women of character, and thoſe I have been ſpeaking of. They aſſociate with the former, and differ from the latter, only in appearances. More free than fond, they impoſe upon your ſex, by lending to ſentiments the leaſt refined, a certain air of paſſion, which is miſtaken for love. They have the art of ſtamping an impreſſion of tenderneſs, upon the vulgar appetite for pleaſure. They would make you believe, that it is from choice, upon a thorough conviction of your extraordinary merits, they ſurrender. If you are not aware of their true character,

you

you will find it difficult to diſtinguiſh the motives of their kindneſs, from a real ſenſibility of heart; and be apt to miſtake for an exceſs of paſſion, what is only a fever of the ſenſes. You flatter yourſelf that you are accepted, as a lover, when you are but invited as a gallant.

Theſe are the ſort of women I ſhould moſt ſuſpect, for ſupplanting the Counteſs. The *financier*'s[1] widow, who has been lately introduced into her parties, is of this character. I perceived it the firſt evening we ſpent together; and in your former letter, you hint at ſome lures ſhe let drop before you. Had not the Counteſs reaſon to be alarmed at theſe advances? Your paſſion for this latter, I do really believe at preſent, to be ſtrong enough to induce you to ſacrifice every conſideration to it. But

[1] A receiver general of the French revenues.

how long may it continue ſo? The lady we are ſpeaking of, is handſome, has gayety and ſpirit, and but juſt entered into that ſtage of life, when women willingly undertake the charge of young men, introduce them into the world, and teach them their firſt leſſons of galantry.

That tender and attentive air, with which ſhe receives and accoſts you, may have its effect. Be on your guard: remember I give you warning. Men unawares, attach themſelves to ſuch women, even while they are deſpiſing them; and they have the art, often to make ye do more ſilly things, than any other ſort of women in the world.

Adieu.

LET-

LETTER XXXVIII.

I AM impatient to acquaint you Marquis, that I have been juſt now ſupporting an argument, againſt Monſieur *de la Bruyere*. Don't you admire at my aſſurance? It is true for all that. He ſaid that *Corneille* has drawn the characters of mankind, as they ought to be, and *Racine* ſuch as they really are. I maintained the direct contrary opinion. We had a very critical audience at this diſpute; and I carried the queſtion, upon a poll. This perhaps, I was not a little vain of. But the *pro* and *con* would take up too much of my letter.—Call to ſee me ſoon, and I may entertain you perhaps, with both ſides of the argument. Every one has their own manner of painting things, and I have mine among the reſt. I ſketch out women juſt as I find them, and am ſorry I cannot repreſent them as they would

would pretend to be. But to your letter.

The kind of languor that oppreſſes you, does not ſurprize me. The indiſpoſition of the Marchioneſs, has deprived you the opportunity of ſeeing her couſin; your heart has continued in the ſame ſituation, for three intire days: 'tis quite natural for ſuch a circumſtance to produce ſuch an effect. Neither does the coolneſs you are ſometimes ſuſceptible of, toward the Counteſs, ſeem more extraordinary to me, than the former. In the fondeſt paſſions one is ſenſible, at times, of certain weary moments, which ſurprize even the perſons themſelves who are affected with them. Love has its *ſyncope's*[a], as well as other *diſeaſes*. Whether the heart, fatigued with its own emotions, ſteals a refreſhing nap; or that its attention

[a] A faintneſs or intermiſſion of pulſe.

is not ſteady enough for contemplating always the ſame object; it ſometimes experiences its intervals of indifference, without being able in the leaſt, to account for them. The ſtronger the *guſt*, the profounder the *calm*: and this ſuſpenſion, believe me, is often more fatal to love, than the very ſtorm and tempeſt itſelf. This paſſion is extinguiſhed by too ſtrong, or too uniform a reſiſtance. The generality of women have only one way of reſiſting: a woman of ſenſe and cleverneſs does more:—ſhe varies her modes of defence; and this is the very ſublime of the art.

But the Counteſs, it ſeems, prefers the duties of friendſhip, to thoſe of love; and this is a new reaſon for your coolneſs toward her. Love is a jealous and tyrannical ſentiment, which is never ſatisfied, unleſs its object ſacrifices to it every taſte, every devoir, every paſſion. You have done nothing for it yet,

yes, while there remains ſtill any thing more to be done. Prefer your duty, friendſhip, or any other ſocial tye, but for an inſtant—it relents—it retaliates.

The forced compliments you pay to the *financiere*, are an inſtance of this unreaſonable pique. I could wiſh however, that you had not carried it ſo far as to attend her on her laſt viſit to the Counteſs. The time you ſtaid with her there, the pleaſure you appeared to ſhew in entertaining her, the queſtions ſhe propoſed to you, with regard to the ſituation of your heart—theſe things I ſay, prove the truth of my ſentiments to you on this head in my laſt letter.

You may pretend if you pleaſe, that all this flirting, has but the more confirmed your paſſion for the Counteſs; but your embarraſſment, when ſhe aſked you

you the next day, how long you had ſtaid with the widow, when you eſcorted her home; the evaſive anſwer you gave, and the pains you took to diſpel her ſlighteſt doubts, ſufficiently convince me that you are more guilty than you would acknowledge, or even than you really imagine yourſelf to be.

The Counteſs herſelf takes the affair in this light; for did you not obſerve the affectation with which ſhe endeavoured to pique your love, by commending your old rival, the Chevalier? I may venture to promiſe for it, that you will not haſtily fall back again into that lethargy you ſo lately complained of. Jealouſy is preparing employment, ſufficient to keep you awake.

But how can you make ſo light of the poor Marchioneſs's misfortune! You will ſoon find, that the ſmall-pox has not altered her face alone: her temper

temper will partake of the change, believe me, as ſoon as her glaſs informs her how great it is. How much I pity her! But, pity her whole ſex, at the ſame time! With what cordiality will ſhe hate, and tear them to pieces! Your Counteſs is at preſent, her deareſt friend.—How long will ſhe continue ſo, think you? She is really, an extreme pretty woman, and has a complexion ſo apt to make others look like gypſies! What envious breaches do I not foreſee!

I forgot to commence a ſerious quarrel with you ſir, for a piece of your ill behaviour to me. You have had the indiſcretion to ſhew moſt of my late letters, to Monſieur *de la Rochefaucault*. I ſhall ceaſe writing to you, if I find you cannot keep a ſecret. I ſpeak my ſentiments freely enough before him, in converſation; but one muſt be a good deal vainer than I am, who can flatter themſelves

themſelves that their writings may be able to ſtand the criticiſm of ſuch a reader. Farewel.

LETTER XXXIX.

THE redneſs, that the ſmall pox has left upon the charms of the unfortunate Marchioneſs, mortifies her extremely. I am not ſurprized at her purpoſe of retiring to the country, for ſome time: ſhe is not really, in a fit condition to appear abroad. If this humbling accident had not happened, the Chevalier might not perhaps have found the ſiege ſo eaſy to carry, as it is probable he had at firſt imagined. May not this ſerve to prove, that women's virtue generally depends upon circumſtances, and diminiſhes always with their pride? [3]

But

3. Here it may be obſerved, that Ninon's imagination is not at all phlegmatic. A ſlight matter ſerves her for proof. In this paſſage ſhe ſuppoſes an event, and then reaſons upon it, as a fact.

But I am afraid of this example for the Counteſs. Nothing is more dangerous for a woman, than the frailty of her friend. Love, in itſelf already too alluring, obtains new vigour by contagion, if you'll allow me the expreſſion. It is not from our hearts alone, it draws its forces: recruits are raiſed from many of the foreign objects that ſurround us. Guilty perſons think it ſome ſcreening of themſelves, to lead others into the ſame ſnare. I am therefore, not at all ſurprized at the many kind things the Marchioneſs has lately ſaid to her couſin, in your favour. Hitherto, they have both of them, conducted themſelves upon the ſame principles [4]. What confuſion then, muſt it be to her, if the Counteſs alone, ſhould have reaped the benefit of them?

[4] See the converſation of the Counteſs, with Monſieur de la Sabliere, Letter XXXI.

The

The Marchioneſs has beſides, a further reaſon at preſent, more than another woman might have had, to contribute toward the defeat of her friend. She has loſt her beauty, and I may therefore be obliged, in order to preſerve her lover, to make ſome condeſcenſions, more than were requiſite in her former ſtate. Can ſhe ſuffer, think you, that another ſhould retain theirs, at a leſs expence? This would be ſubmitting to a mortifying ſuperiority: I am therefore convinced that ſhe would run any length, to reject the moral of your charming *Adelaide*. Should ſhe ſucceed? in good truth I tremble at the unluckineſs of circumſtances! To have been once, as handſome as our friend—to ceaſe to be ſo any longer, our rival's charms each day improving—yet ſtill to be condemned to appear in contraſt with her! Oh ſir! it is a trial, beyond our wiſeſt's ſtrength! it baffles

all

all philoſophy! Among women, friendſhip cancels, or commences rivalſhips. I mean the conteſt for beauty only—it would be too much to add that of paſſion alſo.

I foreſee it with concern, but I muſt predict it to you. Whatever precautions the Counteſs may uſe, to ſooth the misfortune of the Marchioneſs, ſhe will make but an ungrateful return for. I don't know how it is, but every thing a pretty woman ſays upon ſuch an occaſion, to one who never was, or is no longer handſome, carries with it a certain air of compaſſion, which cancels all her kindneſs, and mortifies the perſon ſhe would conſole. The more pains ſhe takes to appear inſenſible of her ſuperiority over the unfortunate object, the more ſhe confirms it; and ſeems to confeſs a *ſubaltern merit* in the other, thro' charity, rather than the ſpontaneous

ous will, with which we uſually acknowledge *inferior* charms [5].

In truth Marquis, women ſeldom deceive each other by the mutual compliments they pay. All of them know perfectly well, what rate to ſet upon civilities of this ſort: ſo that as they ſpeak without ſincerity, they liſten without gratitude: and ſhould the female panegyriſt be of the beſt faith in the world, in other particulars, the fair one whoſe beauty is praiſed, in order to judge of her veracity, attends leſs to her words, than her features. Is ſhe homely? we believe, and love the flatterer. Near our own rank of beauty? we receive the compliment coolly, and diſdain her. But, if handſomer—we hate her worſe, even than we did before. In ſhort, believe me, that while the pre-eminence

[5] Damn with *faint* praiſe, commend with civil *leer*. POPE.

of

of charms remains in contempt between two females, no perfect amity can ever be eſtabliſhed. Can two merchants, who have the ſame goods lying on hands, enter into a ſtrict friendſhip together?

For want of this hint, the real cauſe of the want of cordiality among women, has ſeldom been inveſtigated. Thoſe who appear the moſt fondly connected, often break for the ſmalleſt matter. Was it this trifle, think you, that occaſioned the breach? It was only the pretext. We conceal the true motives of our actions, when the diſcovery may be to our diſadvantage: we muſt never admit that the mortification, ariſing from our friend's beauty, had eſtranged us from her: this would be to betray our jealouſy, our envy; and we would rather be deemed unjuſt, than yield our rival ſo high a triumph. Whenever two pretty women are ſo lucky, to meet with

with the leaſt plauſible occaſion, of *tidding themſelves* of each other, they lay hold of it with ſo much eagerneſs, and hate one another ſo cordially, that one may eaſily judge what ſort of an affection had ſubſiſted between them before.

Well Marquis, do I ſpeak my mind freely enough to you? You ſee how far my ſincerity carries me. I endeavour to give you juſt notions of every thing, and am not ſparing even of my own expence; for I am certainly, not more exempt than another, from the failings I deſcribe. But as I truſt, that all I have ſaid will remain a ſecret between us, I am not afraid of bringing myſelf into a ſcrape with my ſex, who would doubtleſs have great reaſon to reſent my frankneſs. The Counteſs however, is above ſuch diſguiſes, and honeſtly confeſſes to the truth of my propoſitions.

How

How few women are there of this ingenuous nature!

Adieu.

LETTER XL.

THE example of the Marchioneſs then, has had no effect yet, upon the heart of her friend? It ſeems on the contrary, that the Counteſs keeps rather more on her guard againſt you; and has reſented ſome ſlight freedoms you have lately indulged yourſelf in with her.

I was in hopes that on this occaſion, ſhe would have reminded you of the former declarations of deference and diſintereſtedneſs, you made on the firſt overtures of your paſſion. This is the uſual way in ſuch caſes. But what is very ſingular in this affair is, that the ſame earneſtneſs, which a woman looks upon as want of reſpect, on the commencement

mencement of an amour, ſhall paſs with her for a proof of love and eſteem, after the completion of it. Liſten to wives and miſtreſſes, attend to their repining murmurs, againſt careleſs huſbands and lukewarm lovers: you'll find their complaints generally to be, that they have *loſt their eſteem*; and they impute their coldneſs to this alone. But among ourſelves, what they imagine to be tokens of reſpect and eſteem, are they not the very reverſe of ſuch ſentiments?

I have told you long ago, that women, would they honeſtly confeſs, make love to conſiſt in warm deſire, even more than men do. Obſerve a miſtreſs, on the commencement of her paſſion, and love is then an *idea*, purely metaphyſical; in which the ſenſes have not the leaſt manner of concern. Like the ſtoic philoſophers, who in the midſt of torments, would not confeſs their pain, ſhe remains ſome time a martyr to her

own ſyſtem: 'till at length, love becomes triumphant, and nature will prevail.

After this, the lover would have much buſineſs truly, to play back her metaphyſical theory upon her. "That "this refined paſſion exiſts ſolely in "ſublime conceits, and ſpiritual inter-"courſe: that it would be degrading "its abſtract and celeſtial nature, to "impure it with any thing merely hu-"man or material," &c.

He may boaſt his ſuperſtitious reverence and devotion — in vain.—The preaching prieſt will never be admitted to ſacrifice at our altars, believe me. His *reſpect* would be taken for affront, his *delicacy* for deriſion, and his *fine-ſpun harangues* for diſingenuous evaſions. All the credit he could expect, would be, that ſhe may perhaps, ſuppoſe his having had leſs delicate engagements with ſome

other fair one, might have reduced him to the ſad neceſſity of parading theſe chimera's before his *miſtreſs—in name only*. And what is admirable upon ſuch occaſions, is, that the very apology they ſupply him with, proceeds from the ſame principle.

I ſee what deference you have for my commands: you have not only expoſed my letters to Monſieur de la Rochefaucault, but you read them in public company. It is true, that the partial opinion of my friends upon them, makes me ſome amends for your indiſcretion; and in truth, I think my beſt way is to proceed without reſerve, as before. But at leaſt, I hope you will have proper caution whenever I ſay any thing, in which the honour of the Counteſs is concerned. Without this condition, you muſt expect no more letters from

NINON.

LETTER XLI.

NO Marquis, ſay what you will, I cannot forgive you that extreme impatience, with which you preſs, for what you ſtile your ſupreme felicity. Ignorant as you are, will you never be perſuaded, that when you are ſecured of a woman's heart, it ſhould be your chief pleaſure to enjoy her defeat for ſome time, before you complete it? You are a perfect novice, if you do not know, that of all pleaſures, thoſe of love require to be huſbanded with the greateſt œconomy. Were I a man, and had the fortune to win a heart, I mean ſuch a one as the Counteſs's, with what parſimony would I uſe my advantage! How many gradations would I oblige myſelf to paſs through, ſucceſſively and ſlowly! How many delicate pleaſures, unknown to the generality of men, would I, as it were,

create

create to myſelf! Like the miſer, I would inceſſantly contemplate my treaſure, rejoice in the richneſs of it, be conſcious that it conſtituted my higheſt felicity, place my whole ſcheme of happineſs in the poſſeſſion of it, in looking upon it as my own peculiar property, in being the abſolute diſpoſer of it,—and yet, ſtrengthen myſelf in the reſolution, not to leſſen it by uſe! What tranſport to read in the eyes of a lovely woman, the dominion you have over her; to obſerve in all her actions relative to you, a ſtill increaſing tenderneſs; to perceive her voice aſſume a ſofter tone, whene'er ſhe ſpeaks of, or to you; to view her bluſhes, even upon a compliment of courſe, and to triumph in her confuſion upon any particular addreſs!

Can there be a ſituation on earth, more flattering than that of a lover, conſcious of a reciprocal flame? And what ſurer proof can he require, than

inſtances like theſe? How charming to be expected with an impatience, that her whole prudence cannot conceal; to be received with a welcome, which charms the more, by the endeavours ſhe makes in part, to hide her tranſport! She has dreſſed herſelf in your taſte, takes the very mien, the accent; the whole air of perſon, that is known to be moſt agreeable to you. Before, ſhe uſed to adorn herſelf, to charm your ſex in general. At preſent, her toilette is ſpread for you alone. For you theſe jewels, this ribbon, that bracelet, are put on. You the ſole object of her whole attire. You are become her ſecond ſelf. She loves you o'er again, in her own image!

Can there, even in love, be a more enchanting ſcene, than the faint reluctance of a yielding fair, ſupplicating you not to take advantage of her weakneſs,—reduced to owe her very virtue

to you? In a word, can any thing be more bewitching, than a voice faltering with emotion, than thoſe denials, for which ſhe ſeems almoſt to reproach herſelf, and ſoftens the rigour of by the moſt tender regards, even before they are complained of?

How can you ſuffer ſuch inchantment to be diſſolved? For my part, I cannot conceive it: and yet, when your haſty wiſhes ſhall be accompliſhed, theſe truly delicate pleaſures diminiſh, in proportion to the facility of your victory. It remained in your power to prolong, to augment them, in affording yourſelf leiſure to contemplate, and enjoy the refined, and ſuperior ſweetneſs of them.

But ye are never ſatisfied, 'till the poſſeſſion is abſolute, eaſy and uninterrupted; and yet, are afterwards ſurprized, to find your hearts affected with

indifference, coldneſs and inconſtancy. Have you not done every thing in your power, to clog yourſelf with the deſired object? How often have I told you, that love ſeldom dies of *hunger*, but frequently of *ſatiety?*

At ſome other time I ſhall make you a confident of my amour with *de Villarceaux*; and you may thence inſtruct yourſelf, after what manner one ſhould conduct a paſſion, to make it laſting. You may then be able to judge whether I underſtand the human heart, and have a true taſte for the refinements of pleaſure. You will learn from my experience, that an œconomy of our paſſions, is perhaps, the only rational *metaphyſics* in love. You will in fine, perceive from hence, how little conſideration you have for your choiceſt intereſts, in your preſent impatient conduct toward the Counteſs.

But,

But, to baffle all your ſchemes, I ſhall be frequent in my viſits and counſels to her. Now do not put on *a long face*, and reproach me with playing a double part, between ye; for in reality according to my notions, I act equally for the advantage of both parties.

Farewel.

LETTER XLII.

I Pity you, Marquis? Not I, truly. You never govern yourſelf by my counſels, and I am not ſorry to ſee you ſuffer for it ſometimes. You thought it was now high time to advance your familiarities with the Counteſs. The unreſerved way ſhe ſpeaks of love, the eaſineſs of her manners, the ready forgiveneſs of your many indiſcretions, the frankneſs of her rallying the *Platoniſts*— all thoſe I ſay, had led you into a preſumption, that the ſeverity of her mo-

rals might have been conſiderably abated, of late. But experience has ſhewn you the ignorance of your error; and all this *external* freedom, you will find to be only an alluring and political artifice.—But then—to abuſe your ſimple-hearted, plain dealing folk, after ſuch a manner! This, moſt ungenerous treatment, truly! and merits all the reſentment that can poſſibly be ſhewn, upon ſo juſtifiable an occaſion!

Now, ſhall I ſpeak to you with my uſual ingenuouſneſs? You are fallen into a miſtake, which is but too common with your ſex. They rarely judge of us, but from outward appearances: they imagine, that every woman who does not hold her virtue conſtantly in armour, may become an eaſier conqueſt, than a prude: nor does even experience convince them of their error. By which means, they expoſe themſelves often to ſevere repulſes, which are therefore the more

more mortifying, as the leaſt expected from that quarter.

Their *reprize* then, is to accuſe us of jilting and caprice. Ye all cry out, with one voice, "Why ſuch equivocal proceedings? If a woman is determined "to remain inexorable, why ſhould "ſhe cruelly amuſe the hopes of her "lover? Should there not be a conformity between your ſentiments and "actions? In fine, is it not ungenerous "to ſuffer us to love you ſtill, while "you diſpenſe with yourſelves for a return? Is not this a diſingenuous—nay, "a diſhoneſt conduct? Is not this to "make a mock of love and ſentiment?" &c.

No, gentlemen—it is only making a *mock* of your vanity.—You doubtleſs, bring a heavy charge againſt us; but after all, it is we in reality, who are the moſt equivocated with: for, do you mention

mention *ſentiment*, only to ennoble a paſſion which is the leaſt *ſentimental* of any ?

Beſides, is it not yourſelves who lay us under the neceſſity of playing this game ? If a woman has even the ſlighteſt knowledge of your ſex, ſhe muſt know that the ſtrongeſt—— the only tye over your affections, is hope : ſhe ought ſurely then, to ſupply conſtant food to your expectations. Should her deportment but once aſſume an invincible air ? No more hope—No more lover. What a forlorn ſtate ! what an humble condition ! For let a woman's virtue be ever ſo ſevere, her heart is never thereby, rendered leſs ſenſible to the deſire of pleaſing ; nor does her glory conſiſt leſs in attracting your homage and adorations.—But, well knowing that thoſe from whom they expect them, tender their devoirs from motives that mortify their pride ; and not being able to rectify this *vulgar de-*

fect,

fect, they employ their whole art in taking a ſafe advantage of it, and ſtill preſerve their admirers, by ſuffering thoſe hopes to ſubſiſt, which they never mean to fulfil.

If they happen to have addreſs, they ſucceed in their ſcheme; and if a woman has the leaſt knowledge of her true intereſts, ſhe will revolve to herſelf what the Counteſs ſaid to me, in our laſt converſation together. "I know well "what ſort of value to ſet upon the "*I love you* of men, and thoroughly "comprehend the full ſcope of their "proteſtations. It is therefore my own "fault, if I ſuffer myſelf to be impo-"ſed upon by them. And indeed, af-"ter one has comprehended their de-"ſign, our pride alone, one ſhould fan-"cy, might be ſufficient to diſconcert "their views. Reſentment, when their "behaviour provokes it, is not the beſt "ſhield we can take up againſt them.

"Whoever

" Whoever is reduced to call in foreign
" aid, and ſummon anger to their aſ-
" ſiſtance, betrays the poverty of their
" own reſources. A fine irony, a ſmart
" raillery, or a mortifying ſlight, are
" more effectual diſcouragements. Let
" there be no quarrels, and there will
" be no occaſion for reconciliations;
" which always gain ſome ground.
" What advantages will not ſuch a
" conduct deprive them of!

" Prudes indeed, take quite another
" method. Make but the leaſt attack
" upon them, and they are up in arms,
" at once; as if the credit of their chaſ-
" tity was to riſe, in proportion to the
" height of their reſentment. But,
" what is the effect of ſo much ſtarch-
" neſs? *Men of the world* are apt to ſay,
" I might not have ſuſtained this re-
" pulſe, had I not ill-timed my attack.
" It is my indiſcretion, and not my
" aſſurance, that is rebuked. At an-
" other

" other conjuncture, the crime of to-
" day, might perhaps, be the merit of
" to-morrow. Her preſent reſentment
" is a hint, to watch a more *critical*
" *minute*, when I may probably obtain
" more indulgence, and diſarm her
" pride. I muſt appeaſe her wrath; and
" the ſureſt way of making her forget
" this offence is, in the inſtant of for-
" giveneſs, to offend again. This I
" ſay, may be their reaſoning with
" theſe *outrageouſly virtuous*, but in my
" manner of treating ſuch impertinence,
" they can never make uſe of this me-
" thod of argument. [5]

" The

[5] A friend of mine, reading this paſſage, reſembled prudes to dwarfs in armour, who if the fight was continued for any time, are apt to ſink under the weight of their own accoutrements. And added, that the difference between theſe *virtuoſo's*, and ſuch as the Counteſs, might be compared to charioteers, who preſerve their ſeat, by ſitting free and eaſy in it. Theſe who fix themſelves ſtiff, are liable to be thrown out by a jolt.

" The Marquis, for example, has " ſometimes betrayed his *reſpectful* in- " tentions, by his eyes. I uſed but one " method, upon theſe occaſions; — I " have ſeemed to take no notice of it, " and inſenſibly gave a turn to the con- " verſation, which drew his attention " upon other objects. This addreſs " ſerved me extremely well, 'till the " laſt time we were together; and then " indeed, there was no farther diſſem- " bling with him. He would have *ho-* " *noured* me with ſome freedoms, which " however, I quickly put a ſtop to; but " without anger. I thought it better " to defend myſelf by reaſon, than by " paſſion. I appeared rather mortified " than provoked; and I am certain, that " my concern affected him more, than " the higheſt reſentment could have " done. He retired on the inſtant with " a deſponding air.—But now, to ſee " what ſtuff the heart is made of! In " the firſt moments I feared I had loſt

" him

" him for ever—I almoſt repented me
" of my cruelty—I thought I had car
" ried my politicks too far. But a
" little reflection reaſſured me again.
" Has coyneſs ever created incon-
" ſtancy?"

In ſhort Marquis, we talked upon this ſubject, 'till we were both of us out of breath.—And, if I can anſwer for woman, I think your Counteſs ſtands upon *firm ground.* You may exclaim aloud againſt her unkindneſs; call her capricious and unjuſt. But no pleaſures of love for her, that are to be purchaſed at the expence of her pride. This is her abſolute reſolve; and ſhe has, believe me, ſtrength ſufficient to ſupport it.

The loſs of your heart would, I really think, be a misfortune ſhe might feel with regret, perhaps her whole life. But, on the other hand, the condi-

tions

tions you impoſe on the preſerving it, are a great deal too ſevere. She would compound this buſineſs with you. She hopes to fix your *regards*, without remitting *thoſe* ſhe owes herſelf. This is a project, worthy of her ſpirit; and I hope it may ſucceed better with her, than the one ſhe formed before, to guard her heart from love. We muſt attend the event.

Shall we meet you to-morrow, on our intended viſit to the preſident's widow? If you have any thing to ſay to us, you may take this opportunity of making your peace.

Adieu.

LETTER XLIII.

I Never expected it Marquis.—But I find that my good will to ſerve you, is to be paid with reproaches only; and I am, it ſeems, to take ſhare with the Counteſs,

Counteſs, of that ill humour her coyneſs has thrown you into. Do you know now, that tho' what you ſay had had any foundation, nothing could have mortified me more, than the ironical tone with which you pretend to compliment me, upon my principles of philoſophy.

But your making me reſponſible, for your ſucceſs in this amour, diverts me extremely. Have you taken it into your head that my deſign in theſe letters, was to give you lectures on ſeduction? Do you make no difference between teaching you how to pleaſe, and inſtructing you how to *delude?* 'Tis time I explained to you the phyſical cauſe of love, both male and female; but did I ever ſay, that women were therefore, the more eaſily won? Did I ever adviſe you to attack them by the ſenſes; or ſuppoſe them to be void of delicacy or ſentiment? I appeal to my

letters

letters—You ſay you have them all—I defy you to produce a ſingle paragraph, to this purpoſe.

While your inexperience and baſhfulneſs ſuffered you to appear in an aukward light before women, I remarked to you the diſadvantages this might ſubject you to, in your progreſs thro' life. I then adviſed you to aſſume a little more ſpirit and confidence, in order to inſpire you by degrees, with that eaſy and liberal addreſs which becomes a gentleman, in a polite commerce with women. But, when I found that you carried your pretenſions too far, and were likely to affect the honour of the Counteſs, I confeſs honeſtly, that I took part againſt you. It was very proper I ſhould do ſo: I was then, become her friend.

You may ſee then, how unjuſt your charges are, againſt me; and I really think,

think, that your opinion of her, is as much ſo. You ſpeak of her, as one of an equivocal character; as a woman who is neither determined for nor againſt galantry; and then peremptorily conclude, that ſhe is only a coquette, of an higher claſs than ordinary.

What a judgment have you framed? But one muſt make allowances for the preſent perturbations of your mind. A diſpaſſionate, unprejudiced perſon might have perceived the Counteſs to be a miſtreſs, full as chaſte as tender;—a woman not profeſſing the *ſhew*, but poſſeſſing the *ſubſtance* of virtue. Finally, an amiable fair, whom honour and prudence have inſpired with the moſt proper conduct to conciliate her love for you, and her duty to herſelf, together.

The difficulty of blending theſe repugnancies into one ſyſtem, is not inconſiderable; and this is the ſource of that

that inequality of behaviour, which perplexes you in her.—Imagine to yourſelf, the ſtruggles ſhe muſt ſuſtain, the varying modes of her defence, and the inconſiſtencies, that muſt unavoidably appear in her actions, who would endeavour to preſerve a lover, whom too continued a reſiſtance might deprive her of.

There is no keeping a ſteady conduct with you men.—You are ſo very impatient, that you fly off frequently, upon the ſlighteſt oppoſition. You do honour to our virtue, but abandon us at the ſame time. And what a diſgrace is this! How many women have ſacrificed themſelves, to prevent ſuch a mortification! But ſince in neither caſe, one is ſure of preſerving the lover, we ought certainly to prefer that method, which may at leaſt intitle us to his affections and eſteem.

This is *our* opinion—For the Counteſs

teſs and I have diſcuſſed, and agreed this point between us. Shew then more equity, Marquis.—Pity, rather than condemn her. If her character had been more remiſs, you would perhaps, have liked it better.—But would you do ſo long? Not you, truly.—Adieu.—We reckon upon your company this evening, at Madame de la Fayette's, and hope to meet you there, in a more rational humour.

To-morrow, the Abbé de Gedoine is to be preſented to me. I am to have a moſt brilliant aſſembly. Will you come? But I know how inſipid it muſt be to you, as the Counteſs will not be with me.—You would ſay of my appartments, what *Malherbe* has of the gardens of the *Louvre:*

In vain you boaſt your charms, your beauties rare!
I ſee them not—*Caliſta* is not there.

LET-

LETTER XLIV.

A Calm has at length ſucceeded to your ſtorm, Marquis; and I perceive from your letter, that you are at preſent, better pleaſed with the Counteſs, even than you are with yourſelf. What an additional force does reaſon obtain, in paſſing thro' ivory teeth, and ruby lips!

Obſerve the different effects of the different conduct of the two couſins. The coyneſs of the one has augmented your eſteem, and confirmed your love: while the kindneſs of the other has rendered the Chevalier faithleſs. Such is the nature of man! and ingratitude the reward of our favours!

This misfortune however, may poſſibly be prevented—And I ſhall upon this occaſion, communicate to you part of

of a letter, I have lately received from Monſieur *de St. Evremond.*—You know the conſtant correſpondence we have always held together.

The young Count de - - - - ſome time ago, married Mademoiſelle de - - -, of whom he had been moſt deſperately enamoured. Soon after, he lamented to me that marriage and poſſeſſion ſhould too generally weaken, nay frequently extinguiſh, the fondeſt, the moſt tender paſſion. We differted a good deal, upon ſo intereſting a ſubject; and as I happenad to write, the ſame day, to *St. Evremond*, I propoſed the *theſis* to him; and I ſend you the anſwer I received, in his own manuſcript.

Monſieur de St EVREMOND
To Mademoſelle de L'ENCLOS.

My ſentiments agree perfectly with yours, madam. It is not always, as

it is commonly imagined, either matrimony or enjoyment, that of themſelves, diminiſh or deſtroy this paſſion. The little diſcretion with which we huſband our affections; too abſolute, too eaſy, too uninterrupted a poſſeſſion; theſe are the real ſources of thoſe *weanings* and diſguſts, which ariſe ſo frequently in love.

When we ſurrender ourſelves up without reſerve, to all the exceſſes of a paſſion, theſe extraordinary tranſports are apt ſuddenly to ſubſide, to leave a cloyed ſatiety upon the mind, and ſuffer the heart to become ſenſible of a liſtleſs vacancy of ſentiment, and chilline's of affection. In vain do we ſeek, out of ourſelves, the cauſes of that calm which ſucceeds our ſtrongeſt emotions. Nor do we ſee that a more equal and laſting pleaſure, had been the conſequence of a little moderation.

Examine

Examine closely, into the movements of your mind when you wish for any thing, and you will find, that your desires arise solely, from a fondness for vanity. The love of change is the very *diastolé* of the heart [6]. Satisfy our curiosity, and our wishes faint away. Whoever then, would fix on a husband, or a lover, should still leave them something to desire: each day should promise something new or rare, for the morrow. Diversify his pleasures; exhibit in the same object, the quickening spirit of variety, and I will answer for his fidelity and constancy.

I acknowledge indeed, that marriage, or what is stiled your *defeat*, is in common life, the sepulchre of love: But then, it is less to the lover, than to

[6] Its dilatation or expansion; which gives a free circulation of the blood thro' the whole animal œconomy.

him to excefs. She muft know how to parcel out her fondnefs, by *retail*—not heap it upon him by *wholefale*. And for this very purpofe, modefty is perhaps, the moft ingenious device, that could poffibly have ever been imagined, by the wit and delicacy of mankind. [8]

But, to deliver herfelf up fo entirely to her paffion, to annihilate herfelf, as it were, in the prefence of her lover, is the part of a meer novice in the fcience. This is not *to love*—'tis *to languifh*—and to fuffer the paffion alfo, foon to do fo too.

I would

[8] This is one, among the many paffages, interfperfed throughout thefe writings, which afford admirable hints to our fex. Modefty is certainly, the fureft charm, to win or wear a lover; *be he delicate, or be he not.* What has been faid of honefty, may be affirmed of this quality, alfo; that it is the *beft policy*; even fuppofing virtue, character, and decency, out of the queftion.

I would have a woman conduct herſelf with better œconomy, and addreſs. The greatneſs of her fondneſs does by no means juſtify her. The heart is a fiery courſer, whoſe mettle ſhould be reſtrained. If you manage not his forces with horſemanſhip, his ſpirit will but the ſooner jade him. The ſame lukewarmneſs that you perceive in the lover, after theſe extraordinary tranſports, you will alſo be ſenſible of in yourſelf; and you will, both of you, in a ſhort time, find yourſelves equally inclined to quit the irrecoverable game. In fine, it requires more genius to love, and to increaſe and prolong the happi- of loving, than is too generally imagined.

'Till the moment of the fatal *Yes*, on whatever terms granted, a woman has but little need of artifice, to preſerve her lover. Curioſity excites, deſire impells, and hope ſuſtains. But when

once ſucceſs has crowned the adventure, ſhe is called upon to uſe as much pains to preſerve her lover, as it coſt him to win her. It requires that the deſire of fixing him ſhould inſpirit her policies; for the heart is like an open town, eaſier to take than keep.

Beauty is ſufficient to win our love; but to inſure our conſtancy, ſomething more is neceſſary. There muſt be ſenſe, addreſs, cleverneſs, and a certain *quickneſs of ſpirit*. But unhappily, when they have once ceded the queſtion, they become too tender, they even prevent our wiſhes. It would be better, for our mutual advantage, were they leſs coy before, and more reſerved after.—I muſt repeat it.—There is no way to poſtpone diſguſt, but by leaving the heart at leiſure, to form its wiſhes.

I hear them continually complaining, that our indifference is generally the con-

conſequence of their compliances; eternally reproaching us with the times, when whole ſummer ſuns rolled unperceived away, in their company. Fruitleſs chiding! 'Tis upon themſelves, not on us, they ſhould call, to reſtore that happy and regretted æra. Let them forget the favours they have already granted, and they will not labour to exceed them. Let them ſuffer us to forget them; and we ſhall exact the leſs. Let them rouſe our affections by new difficulties; let our ſollicitudes revive—in a word, ſuffer our doubts ſtill to require freſh proofs of a paſſion, the certainty of which ſo much abates the value. Thenceforward, they will have leſs to complain of in us, and more to be ſatisfied with in themſelves.

I tell it to you frankly,—the ſcenes would be quite ſhifted, if women would conſtantly bear in mind, that their *rôle* was always to receive petitions—ours,

to ſupplicate and earn new bounties. That made to *grant*, they ought never to *give*. Reſerved even in the exceſs of paſſion, they ſhould not yield themſelves up to it, without controul. Leave the lover always ſomething farther to deſire, and he will be obſequious to obtain it. Full compliances render the moſt bewitching charms of none effect, and ſoon diſguſt the very perſon who exacts them. This is not a ſpeculative *problem*, but a truth of confirmed experience.

Poſſeſſion places all women on a level. The homely and the fair, after their conqueſt, have no difference between them, except the art of preſerving ſtill our hearts. But what is commonly the caſe? A woman thinks ſhe has nothing farther to do, than to be ſubmiſſive, fond, mild, even-tempered and faithful. So far indeed, ſhe judges right, that theſe qualities ſhould be

be the foundation of her character; they will ſecure our eſteem: but valuable as they are, if not ſeaſoned with a ſpice of humour and caprice, they will ſuffer the flame to languiſh, *for want of air*, and a certain wearineſs and langnor to obtain. Mortal poiſons to the beſt conſtituted hearts.

Do you know in fine, the reaſon why lovers are ſo ſoon tired of proſperity? and why women pleaſe ſo little after having pleaſed ſo much? 'Tis becauſe both parties have, each of them, an opinion equally falſe. One imagines that there is nothing more to gain; and the other, that there is nothing more to give. Upon which notion, the one ſlackens his purſuit, and the other neglects to exert herſelf; or at beſt, confines her exertion within the province of ſubſtantial merit. They ſubſtitute reaſon and eſteem for paſſion. Then farewel the quick-

quickening ſalt of love: Adieu the wholeſome gales of jealous altercation, which purge the ſtagnant lake of ſubſided affection.

But, when I ſay that the *dead calm* of a fond commerce, ſhould be ſometimes *ruffled by breezes*, you will not, I hope, imagine that I would have two lovers ſpend their lives in ſquabbles together. I would have their piques, their expoſtulations, to ariſe from the delicacies of love, alone: that the fair one ſhould never, from puſillanimous acquieſcence, remit thoſe deferences and regards, which ſhe has both a natural, and a purchaſed right to: that from too tender a ſenſibility, ſhe would not make of love, a ſource of inquietudes, to embitter all her days: that by too ſcrupulous a conduct ſhe would not leave the lover in too great ſecurity that he has nothing to apprehend, from that quarter: in fine, that ſhe ſhould

ſhould never, from too eaſy and even a diſpoſition, have the weakneſs to pardon, or paſs by, every deficiency of reſpect and attention, which too ſecure lovers are apt to be careleſs about. Experience often proves, that women loſe the hearts of their huſbands or lovers, by an exceſs of indulgence and remiſſneſs. How weak a conduct! They make a merit of ſacrificing every thing to them; they ſpoil, and render them ungrateful. Too much bounty turns againſt themſelves at laſt; for by uſe, they begin to look upon that as their right, which was at firſt, accorded them only as a favour.

Have you not known women, even among the moſt deſpicable of their ſex, to govern with a rod of iron, treat like vaſſals, thoſe unfortunate perſons who happened to fall under their power, rendering them contemptible to the eyes of the world, by the uſurped and arbitrary

trary ſway they bear over them. And yet, are not theſe the wives and miſtreſſes, who generally the longeſt maintain their empire!—I know that a woman of ſenſe, breeding or moral, will never frame her conduct, upon ſuch unſeemly examples as theſe. So militant an air is repugnant to the ſoftneſs of feminine manners, and contrary to that propriety and decency, which make the charm, even of thoſe things which lead them aſide from virtue. But, midway between the termagant and milk-ſop, may perhaps be found the claſs of women the fitteſt to govern us, both for the continuance of our happineſs, and their own. We are a ſort of ſlaves, that too much lenity renders inſolent; and we frequently require to be treated like thoſe in America—with diſcipline and chains. We have in our minds, a certain innate notion of juſtice, which informs us that the hand that rules us, may fall heavy

heavy upon us ſometimes, with reaſon; and we therefore acquieſce without a murmur.

To conclude—In every thing that falls within the province of love, women ought to be our abſolute ſovereigns. 'Tis from their hands alone, we are to receive our happineſs and pleaſures. And they will infallibly ſupply our lives with both, when they ſhall have learned to manage our affections with judgment, to moderate their own with diſcretion, and to maintain their ſway, without *expoſing*, or abuſing it.

St Evremond.

LETTER XLV.

IN two words I will anſwer you, Marquis. In order to profit of the counſels of St Evremond, a woman muſt have firſt excited a ſtrong paſſion in her lover, and have conceived but a ſlight one

one in herſelf. To the reſt, we ſhall diſcuſs thoſe points at a more leiſure interval. I proceed now, to your own concerns.

The ſacrifice, that the Counteſs has required from you, deſerved well the price you have ſet upon it. To quit a woman for her, who by her whole behaviour toward you, has declared herſelf willing to accept you, upon your own terms.—to renounce her publickly, in the very preſence of her rival; and with ſo little ſaving to the pride of the forſaken fair, was really an effort which merited the higheſt recompence. She could never have framed a better pretence for making you a preſent of her picture.

But to fix upon ſo ſignal an occaſion, as the day the Marchioneſs received her firſt viſits; to chuſe a time when the low *cit* had the vanity and preſumption

of

to put on all her attractions, and dispute the prize with a *woman of quality*; to speak to her only, *en passant*; to appear wholly wrapt up in the pleasure of seeing her rival, to entertain her apart, and to form all her parties—This is an outrage, that can never be forgiven; and the *financiere*, depend upon it, will never be at peace within herself, untill she has taken ample vengeance, for so mortifying an affront.

Now, to the second article of your letter. You interrogate me whether *the last favour*, or rather, *the last fault*, be a convincing argument of a woman's love. Ay — or No?

Yes—if you happen to be her first passion; and that she has either delicacy or virtue. But even in this case, the proof is neither more certain, nor more flattering, than the many lesser tokens of her fondness, she must have suffered

to

to eſcape her, before. Every thing, that is ſaid or done by a woman who truly loves, even the moſt inſignificant to common apprehenſion, are full as ſure marks of paſſion, as thoſe which you make ſuch a rout about.

I may alſo add, that if even this woman ſhould happen to be of *a certain complexion*, the laſt favour may be rather a leſſer proof of her paſſion, than many other ſacrifices or condeſcenſions, which perhaps might have been deemed of too ſmall moment to be made account of. For, in that inſtance, ſhe might have conſidered herſelf, more than you: She may have had ſo much intereſt in complying, as to leave you nothing to be vain of, in perſuading. Any other in your place, might have the ſame ſucceſs.

I knew a woman once, who had been overcome, two or three times, by

by perſons whom ſhe had no particular liking to, while the one ſhe really loved, had ſighed and ſued in vain. It may therefore happen, that the laſt favour ſhall not prove any thing in the *theſis* you propoſe. On the contrary, a man may obtain it ſometimes, from a woman's indifference toward him. We never reſpect ourſelves ſo highly, as before thoſe we eſteem; and it muſt therefore, require a ſtronger degree of paſſion, to hurry a woman of any ſentiment, into a breach of decorum, before one whoſe good opinion ſhe ſets account by. Your boaſted triumphs then, may frequently ariſe from motives, which far from ſatisfying your pride, might mortify your vanity, to the laſt degree, were they but ingenuouſly confeſſed.

One perceives, for example, a lover ſlacken in his addreſſes, on reſiſtance.

One

One fears his elopement, to throw himſelf at the feet of ſome kinder fair. Care for him or not, one cares not to loſe him. It is always humiliating to ſee one's ſelf forſaken. One yields, meerly for want of knowing any other method of ſtaying him. The fault ſhould not lie at her door: If he quits her after, the blame be his. For as women attach themſelves more ſtrongly, by the very favours they beſtow, they are led into a vain notion, that ſurely gratitude ſhould form a cloſer tye, on the receipt of them. Silly novices!

Others comply from various motives; curioſity determines one; ſhe would know what love is. Another, on defect of the charms of beauty, would attract by thoſe of pleaſure. A third, has conceived an ambition to attach a man whoſe devoirs may flatter her vanity; and ſacrifices every thing to this principle.

principle. Others may yield tho' compaſſion, opportunity, importunity, reſentment to a faithleſs lover, &c.—But enough.—In ſhort, the heart is ſo capricious, and the reaſons which determine it ſo whimſical and various, that it is impoſſible to enumerate all the ſprings that govern its motions. But, if we are apt to miſtake the means of fixing ye, ye are alſo as often deceived with regard to the proofs of our paſſion. Was there any delicacy among your ſex, they would perceive tokens of our fondneſs in many things, more than our moſt ſignal favours.

Tell me Marquis, what have I done to Monſieur *de Coulanges?* He has not come near me, this month paſt. Tho' in my own defence, I muſt ſay, that I always received him with the higheſt politeneſs. He is one of the moſt agreeable men I know. I ſhall be angry, if you do not bring him to ſee me, on

my return from *Verſailles*. I long to hear him ſing the laſt ode he has compoſed; they ſay it is extremely fine.

Adieu.

LETTER XLVI.

YOU are extremely polite, Marquis, in your expreſſions upon my abſence. If I have not written to you ſince my coming to the country, it was becauſe I thought I had left you in a moſt proſperous ſituation; and this conſideration rendered me quite eaſy about you. Beſides, I thought that love ſhould be indulged in all its rights, as its empire is generally ſo ſhort. And as friendſhip is a quite different province, I waited patiently, 'till ſome interval of pleaſure might afford you leiſure, to attend to my correſpondence.

Do you know how I was employed all the while? I amuſed myſelf with combining

bining the events which muſt naturally ariſe, from the ſituation of affairs in which I left your little ſociety. I knew the arts of the Counteſs, againſt her rival, and concluded that an open rupture muſt be the conſequence of them. I foreſaw that the Marchioneſs would take part, rather with the latter; for the *financiere* is not quite ſo handſome as the former; which muſt have been a deciſive argument, for declaring in her favour, as this alliance leaves her in leſs danger of an *eclipſe*. I knew that all this would terminate in a ſquabble, among the women; but throughout this revolution, I am glad to find, that your good fortune ſtill maintains its ground.

Every day will ſupply you with new reaſons, for loving and eſteeming your charming Counteſs. A woman of ſuch real merit, and ſo engaging a figure, muſt win upon you, in proportion to your acquaintance with her. Let no-

thing weaken your attachment to her. You have, 'tis true, obtained a confeſſion of her paſſion toward you. Is ſhe the leſs eſtimable, upon that account? Ought it not rather, to augment the value of a prize, every degree of certainty you acquire, of your being the ſole poſſeſſor? Nay, ſhould ſhe even yield you the *laſt proof*, which was the ſubject of a late letter, ought this to leſſen your eſteem?

You'll excuſe my freedom; but I cannot help ſaying, that the *happy*, of your ſex, too often betray a moſt unmanly meanneſs of ſentiment, breeding and moral, in their conduct, toward the *unhappy*, of ours. Their narrow ſouls make no diſtinction, between a *weakneſs*, and a *vice*; and puniſh for *misfortunes*, as for *crimes*. What height of depravation, to add inſult to perfidy! Can they not become inconſtant, without being unjuſt, alſo? Were it not

not enough, that *apathy* ſucceed to *paſſion*, but muſt *diſguſt* purſue *deſire*? Even were ſhe *criminal*, is it the *receiver*, the *accomplice*, that ſhould inflict the penalty? A *banditti* would behave with more juſtice, with more honour. They ne'er *betray*—they ne'er *impeach*—except to ſave a life.

Preſerve then, your ſentiments for the Counteſs, intire, to the end; nor ever, let your event be what it may, ſuffer a falſe opinion to interrupt the progreſs, which her merits muſt naturally make, both in your affections and eſteem. It is not their *defeat*, in itſelf, which ought to render women deſpicable. The manner in which they defend, ſurrender, and conduct themſelves after, ſhould be the ſole rule of thoſe judgments, the world has a right to form, either of *compaſſion*, or *contempt*.

Madame *de la Fayette*, you ſay, ſeems to think, that my laſt letter was on too free a ſubject? You ſee what cenſures your indiſcretion has laid me under. But, ſhe did not conſider, that I was no more culpable in that particular, than a lecturer in anatomy. I analize the *moral*, as he diſſects the *natural* man. Would you not think him too ſcrupulous, to omit in his courſe, thoſe parts of his ſubject, which might afford to idle minds, occaſions of looſe reflection? It is not the nature of things, that conſtitutes indecance; neither the words, nor even the ideas. 'Tis the intention, of thoſe who ſpeak, or the depravity, of them who hear. Madame *de la Fayette* is the perſon in the world, whom I ſhould have leaſt ſuſpected, for ſuch a criticiſm. I ſhall wait upon the Counteſs to-morrow, and convince her of *La Fayette's* error.

Adieu.

LET-

LETTER XLVII.

HOW can you imagine, Marquis, that I should be surprized, at the new lures the *financiere* has thrown out before you? Do you think I am a stranger to women? I never doubted for a moment, that she would use every artifice of coquetry, to snatch you from the Countess. She may perhaps, have conceived some little inclination toward you, herself; but moderate your vanity upon that occasion; for be assured, that her most active motive is, the transport of revenge. Her pride is interested to mortify her rival, for having already obtained the preference. Women never forgive such an affront as this. And if he who is the subject of the quarrel, be not the principal object of their pique, they always make use of him, for the purposes of their resentment.

You have met with in the *financiere*, all you required in the Counteſs, to confirm your attachment to her. She tenders you ſpontaneouſly, the reward of thoſe ſervices you proffer, and which by way of further compromiſe, ſhe may perhaps, remit you. And I much fear, you are indelicate enough, to accept of ſuch mean terms. For, to your ſhame be it ſpoken, the motto of all men's hearts is, *To the moſt complying*.

But, ſhould you not bluſh, to deſerve the leaſt reproach from the Counteſs? What ſort of perſon do you ſeem to prefer before her? A woman, without delicacy or love; moved by no attractions, but thoſe of pleaſure; more vain than ſenſible; more voluptus than tender; and more amorous than fond: who values nothing in you, but your youth—and the qualities which attend it.

You

You are quite ſenſible of the whole worth of her rival; you acknowledge the wrongs you do her; you confeſs yourſelf to be a monſter of ingratitude, and yet you cannot exert reſolution enough, to merit her forgiveneſs! In truth Marquis, I am at a loſs to account for you; and begin to agree with Madame *de Sevigné*, who ſays, that her ſon knows his duty, and can reaſon upon it well; but his paſſions hurry him away; ſo that *it is not his head that is mad, but his heart* [9].

It would be idle here, to repeat to me what I formerly advanced, about the cavalier manner in which the affair of love was to be treated. At that time, I rather amuſed myſelf with ſome light reflections, than pretended to give you advice in form. Beſides, the queſtion then, regarded only a ſlight, a tempo-

[9] In her letters to Madame *de Grignan*, her daughter.

rary attachment, a common miſtreſs; but your preſent ſituation is of quite a different nature. I am certain, that there is not, in the whole circuit of *Paris*, any woman, who can be brought even within the degrees of compariſon, with that amiable perſon you are now quitting, ſo fooliſhly. And for what reaſon, I pray you? Becauſe forſooth, her reſiſtance mortifies your vanity. Kind, or unkind, we equally loſe ye! What bonds remain there, to withhold ſuch fugitives?

However, I agree with you, that when a paſſion is in *embrio*, it is no eaſy matter to receive the flame. *One hasn't no more in their power, to continue love, than they had to reſiſt it.* I confeſs the truth of ſuch maxims, but confeſs them with regret, when I conſider, that in conſequence of them, you are quitting the *jewel*, for the *paſte*; that you renounce a ſolid happineſs, and laſting

pleaſures,

pleaſures, for tranſient joys, and capricious appetites.

But, I foreſee that all my reaſonings will not reclaim you. I begin even to apprehend, that you are grown weary of my moral; and to ſpeak the truth, I think it almoſt ridiculous to preach up conſtancy to you, after it has appeared your love has ceaſed, and that—*your heart is mad.* I reſign you therefore, to your evil genius; though I may perhaps, ſtill have good-nature, or curioſity enough, to accompany you in your future wanderings. What avails it to afflict one's ſelf? Should I aſſume the air of a pedagogue?—Not I truly—We ſhould neither of us gain any thing by the bargain. I ſhould only tire myſelf, without reforming you.

So, fare you well.

LETTER XLVIII.

I Muſt confeſs Marquis, that your late behaviour toward the Counteſs, had put me a good deal out of humour with you; and I was very near breaking off all commerce between us, upon conſidering what a good-for-nothing ſort of fellow you are. But the eaſineſs with which I have relented at your inſtances, makes me imagine, that my friendſhip for you, has ſome mixture of weakneſs in it.

What you ſay is true enough, that *to continue one's attachment to a perſon, only while they liſten to our counſels, is but being half a friend.* The more dangerous your ſituation is, the leſs certainly, I ſhould abandon you. But, one is not always maſter of their firſt movements. Whatever efforts I made, to philoſophize away your guilt, were borne down,

down, by the ſuperior intereſts I had taken, in the misfortunes of my fair ally. And who could avoid thinking you highly criminal, when you had given ſo charming a woman cauſe of complaint againſt you? But at preſent, ſince I find her ſituation beginning to grow eaſier, every day, I am almoſt ſorry for the coolneſs of my laſt letter.

I ſhall henceforth, content myſelf in compaſſionating her, without ever urging you any farther, upon this ſubject; ſo let us carry on our former intercourſe, with the ſame careleſs freedom as before. You need apprehend no more lectures from me; for I perceive they would, after this, be both uſeleſs, and out of ſeaſon.

I wiſh you health. Adieu.

LETTER XLIX.

YOU never imagined Marquis, that it might be sometimes more difficult to disengage one's self from a mistress, than to gain one. However, you have experience of it in your own case, at present. Your disgust at the *financiere*, surprizes me only in this, that it did not happen sooner. Can it be possible, that acquainted as you are with her character, you can be so far imposed upon by her, as to mistake the despair she affects at your indifference, for the symptom of a real passion? That you should still remain the dupe of her intrigue, not only raises my wonder, but compassion too. Yet, is it not your own vanity that helps to carry on the illusion? And in truth, it is one of a very peculiar nature, which can be able to flatter you with the love of such a woman. But men are really, so self-sufficient,

ſufficient, that they would be puffed up with the fondneſs of the moſt abandoned courteſan.

But, prithee undeceive yourſelf. A woman that you quit, who is of the character of your amorous fair, has, be aſſured, no manner of concern in her misfortune, except for her own ſingle intereſt. She would endeavour, by her emotions and her tears, to perſuade you, that your merit and accompliſhments are the ſole cauſes of her regret: that the failure of your affections is the only loſs ſhe has to lament: and that ſhe knows no perſon upon earth, who can be capable of repairing her damage.

But, all theſe pretexts are truly diſingenuous. It is not an afflicted miſtreſs, who implores you. 'Tis a vain woman, mortified at having her own inconſtancy anticipated; piqued at the weak

deſpair of ſucceeding on ſuch another *criſis*. Sufficiently happy in having *taken a heart by ſurprize*, they fear to loſe *a ſubſtance*, by graſping at *a ſhadow*. And as the ſmalleſt interval of conſideration, might afford the miſtreſs leiſure, to reflect upon the ſlight value of the lover, what is their policy? They make a *virtue of neceſſity*; they found a ſuperſtition upon love; and employ reaſon to preſerve a heart, which they owe meerly to caprice, to accident, or ſurprize.

Prithee do not rank yourſelf in ſo inſignificant a claſs. Hearts are the *coin* of galantry: amiable perſons the *commodities* of this commerce: *circulation* is the life of trade, and equally benefits the community. A conſtant perſon then, is as blameable as a miſer, who arreſts the medium of traffic, and hoards up a treaſure uſeleſs in itſelf, unleſs ſet free for the emolument of others.

Beſides,

Besides, what satisfaction is there in a mistress, to whom one is held attached, by reason only? How languid the pleasure! What violence sustained, in feigning to love where passion has surceased! It rarely happens, that fondness becomes extinct on both sides, at the same time; and then, what a misfortune is constancy! It may be compared to the cruelty of that antient tyrant, who chained the living and the dead together. What difference is there, between the inflictions?

Root out a prejudice then, so injurious to society. Follow my advice—tender your addresses to the President's widow you mentioned to me lately; she may perhaps lye a little heavy on hands, now and then; but at least, she will not degrade your passion. If, as you say, she be as deficient in sense, as she abounds in beauty, her empire will not continue long; you will be then, the

sooner

ſooner reſtored to liberty again; and I doubt not but another, or many other galantries may ſucceed. Nay, perhaps you may not wait the ſlowneſs of ſucceſſion; for I perceive from the libertiniſm of your letter, that you are become quite a *man of mode*. The new ſyſtem you have adopted, is perfectly in that character; and is of admirable œconomy. Never to finiſh one amour, 'till you have commenced another; and not to withdraw yourſelf from a firſt engagement, but in proportion to your progreſs in a ſecond.—Can any thing be better contrived? But, as all theſe ſage precautions may leave one unluckily unprovided; as ſome event beyond the reach of human foreſight, may poſſibly diſconcert your politics, or rather, *confound your devices*—to eſtabliſh it as a principle, to part always on friendly terms with your former miſtreſſes, in order to reſerve ſomewhat to amuſe your *vexations*—this, I muſt confeſs,

feſs, Marquis, ſhews you to be a perfect *Martinet* in galantry. In ſhort, it muſt be impoſſible to make any improvement upon the wiſdom of ſuch a plan. Adieu.

I do not know how I have the courage to write you ſuch long and ſilly letters. I find ſo much pleaſure in correſponding with you, that it would alarm me if I did not know my heart well. But, I recollect that it is at preſent diſengaged; and I muſt therefore keep on my guard, for ſome time, as I find you have fallen into a humour lately, of ſaying tender things to me, and I don't know how ſoon I may take it into my head to believe you.

Once more, Adieu.

LET-

L'ETTER L.

YOU may make a jeſt of it, if you pleaſe, but I do affirm it for a truth, that you are not in reality, ſmitten with the fair *Preſidente*. Believe me Marquis, that I ſee farther into your heart, than you do yourſelf. I have known a number of well-meaning people, with all the ſincerity in the world, imagine like you, that they were mightily in love; while in fact, they were not in the leaſt actuated by any one ſymptom of that paſſion.

It is of the diſorders of the heart, as it is of thoſe of the body; ſome are real, and others imaginary. Every thing that attaches you to a woman, is not always love. The habit of being together, the facility of ſeeing each other, the flying from one's ſelf, the amuſements of galantry, the deſire of

pleaſing,

pleasing, the hope of success; in a word, a thousand other motives, which resemble an elephant as much as a passion, are what men, more frequently than is imagined, mistake for love: and women also affect to confirm you in this error. Flattered at the homage they receive, while it feeds their vanity, they rarely examine into the philosophy of the matter. And are they not in the right of it? What a deal of pleasure would they lose!

To the motives I have been mentioning, you may add another, which is as likely as any, to deceive you with regard to the nature of your affections. The *Presidente* is certainly, as pretty a woman as any in *Paris*; just entered into her *teens*; and has lately refused the addresses of a man of high merit and accomplishments. Nothing could surely flatter your vanity more, than such a conquest; which might procure you at once

once that *empty* fame, you men are generally ſo puffed up with. This, friend Marquis, is what you call love; and it may be a difficult matter to undeceive you; for when ſanguine minds have once conceived an *imaginary* diſorder, the moſt foreign ſymptoms are apt to be referred to the *real one*.

It may be entertaining enough, in a ſhort time, to hear with what dignity you will ſpeak of your ſuppoſed ſentiments; how ſeriouſly you will think they have a right to challenge a grateful return. And what may be pleaſanter ſtill, would be the deferences that ſhe herſelf might imagine to be their due. But, the event may clear up your underſtanding, and you will then be the firſt, to laugh at that air of importance you had given to ſo inſignificant an affair.

Shall I tell you the whole of my opinion about you? I am perſuaded that you

you will never be in love again. You will be ſenſible for the future, of but wandering likings, ſlight attachments, or capricious engagements. Its arrows will but ſlightly glance o'er your *coat of mail*. You will no more indeed, ſuſtain its pains; but can you e'er again, experience its pleaſures? Can you ever expect to find, in ſuch *extempore* paſſions as you have thrown yourſelf away upon, any of thoſe delicate and delicious moments, which formerly framed your higheſt bliſs! I do not mean to flatter you; but I think I owe you the juſtice to ſay, that your heart is formed for refined pleaſures. It is not you therefore, upon whom I charge the unhappy diſſipation of your preſent life; it is upon the ſilly young men you aſſociate with; with whom the *uſe* of pleaſure is its *abuſe*; and example leads you. But this giddineſs of the ſenſes, will ſooner or later, cure itſelf; and you will be then ſenſible—at leaſt, I wiſh it ſincerely

ſincerely—that you have been miſtaken in two inſtances, with regard to the ſituation of your heart. You think that it is enamoured of the *Preſidente*; you will then perceive your error. You think that it has ceaſed all ſentiment for the Counteſs. But remember what I have told you. A time may come, when we ſhall talk upon this ſubject, with more pleaſure and leiſure. Let us proceed now to the reſt of your letter.

I believe you will hardly deny, Marquis, but you were at a loſs how to employ your time this morning, when you amuſed yourſelf in reading over all my letters; and I fancy that you were not a little out of humour alſo, by your *playing the critic* upon them as you have done. Some brilliant party, ſome flattering aſſignation, muſt certainly have failed you juſt then. But I do not mean to elude the difficulty you propoſe. I appear you ſay, to contradict

myſelf

myſelf often? Should I acknowledge this to be true, might I not, at the ſame time, make the apology that *la Bruyere* did to ſome cavils of the ſame kind? *It is not I that contradict myſelf, but the heart upon which I reaſon.*

But do you conclude from hence, that all I have ſaid on this ſubject is falſe? I can hardly think you ſo ignorant. However, it is not unlikely that being perplexed by the various ſituations I have found you in, I might have appeared ſometimes to deſtroy thoſe maxims I had before advanced, upon different occaſions. May it not be probable, that upon ſeeing you in danger of falling into error, I might have preſſed too far thoſe truths, which weakly urged might be thought too inſufficient to have reclaimed you? How do I know, in fine, but that being intereſted in the happineſs of a friend, my warmth to ſerve her may have ſomewhat warped my ſincerity?

But one would fancy that I was as idle as you, to anſwer ſeriouſly to the cavils of your letter. Might I not have perceived at firſt ſight, that there was more pique than criticiſm in it? But this is the laſt time you ſhall ever abuſe my good-nature. Adieu. I am going to conſole myſelf for your ingratitude, with the converſation of Monſieur de - - - - - -. A very different perſon from you, I aſſure you.

What pity 'tis, that you are not a woman! I ſhould have ſo much pleaſure in diſputing with you about our new-faſhioned head-dreſſes. I never ſaw any thing ſo enormous as the height of them. However Marquis, I really think that if the *Preſidente* does not put on one, incontinently, you cannot in decency, continue your *devoirs* any longer to her.

LET-

LETTER LI.

'TIS then a ſettled affair, it ſeems. Say what I will, you remain ſtill enamoured of the *Preſidente*. She has ſacrificed a beloved rival to you, and you are in triumph. How ready is your vanity to take advantage of every thing! But, I ſhould laugh heartily, if your boaſted victory ſhould end in her giving you an *audience of leave*, in a day or two: For, it is not at all impoſſible, but that the ſacrifice you ſo much glory in, may be meerly a *fineſſe d'amour*. During the free commerce you have had among women, have you never picked up ſo much experience, as to ſuſpect every ſentiment they affect? But, if your yielding fair one ſhould have only played you off, to awake the drowſy paſſion of her former Celadon; if you ſhall find yourſelf,

after all, but made a tool of, and uſed as the *whip* of artifice, or *ſpur* of jealouſy, I beg you may not loſe your ſenſes, in wonder and amazement.

The *Preſidente* you'll tell me, has not the leaſt manner of cunning, and is therefore incapable of ſuch a ſtratagem. My dear Marquis, love is an admirable tutor; and the dulleſt perſons imaginable in other matters, frequently diſcover a more ſubtle, juſt and certain diſcernment than the wiſeſt heads, where the intereſt of their hearts happen to come into queſtion. But, let us quit your particular inſtance, and ſpeak in general, of men in the like circumſtances.

They imagine, juſt as you do, that the ſacrifice which is made them of a rival, ſuppoſes their ſuperiority over him. But how often does it happen, that the formality of this renounce, is

a meer

a meer farce? If ſhe really diſcards him, either ſhe loved him, or ſhe did not. If ſhe had loved him, 'tis plain by her quitting, that ſhe loves him no longer: And in that caſe, what glory have you to boaſt, upon ſuch a preference? If ſhe never loved him, what have you to be proud of, in triumphing over a man, toward whom ſhe had always been indifferent?

There is another caſe alſo, where you may be preferred, without having any more reaſon to flatter yourſelf on the conqueſt; and that is, when the vanity of your miſtreſs is greater than her paſſion for the diſgraced lover. Your rank, figure, character and fortune may determine ſuch a one in your favour. It is very rare, I ſpeak it to the confuſion of women, nor are men a bit more rational in this reſpect, that a lover, who has nothing but paſſion and high ſentiments to urge, can long ſtand

his ground, againſt one who is diſtinguiſhed by his quality, his ſtation, his dependents, his liveries, equipage, &c[1]. * * * * * * * * * * * * *. Beſides, the deceaſed preſident was a judge, and without doubt as formal and old-faſhioned as his band or peruke. What an impreſſion to be worn away, by a courtier and a warrior ſuch as you! Well

[1] The paſſage which follows here, in the French, appears unintelligible to me. The conſtruction of the words is eaſy enough, but the meaning or ſcope of them, is difficult. I have, therefore, left them out in the tranſlation; chuſing rather to give *no ſenſe*, than *nonſenſe*. But ſhall give them here, in the original, to exerciſe the ingenuity of my readers. Dès que l'Amant le plus tendre peut faire rougir une femme; dès qu'elle n'ôſe avouer ſon Vainqueur; dès qu'elle n'ôſe même ſe faire un merite de la ſacrifier, je le prédis; ſon règne ne ſera pas long. Elle ne ſera embarraſſée que de choiſir dans toutes le bonnes raiſons qu'elle aura de le quitter.

Well Marquis, will you believe my prophecies again? What did I tell you lately? Has the *Chevalier* found it ſuch a difficulty to perſuade your *Penelope?* This deſponding miſtreſs, juſt expiring on the loſs of one lover, in leſs than a fortnight, has accepted another, pretends a paſſion for him, ſurrenders, and is forſaken. Has ſhe loſt any time, think you? Your ſentiments I pray, upon this ſubject? Adieu.

LETTER LII.

YES Marquis, it is to my friendſhip, it is to my counſels, that the Counteſs owes the tranquillity ſhe now begins to enjoy. But I cannot conceive for what reaſon you ſhould complain of the indifference ſhe marks toward you. And do you expect pity from me! I ſhall have great compaſſion for the wounds of vanity truly! Men are the oddeſt creatures! They would

have women ſtill regard them as objects of conſequence, tho' in quitting them they generally neglect nothing to manifeſt their indifference toward them.

What ſignifies to you, the love or hate of one you have now no longer any paſſion for? Your jealouſy of the little Duke, is ſo unaccountably ridiculous, that it made me laugh outright, when I came to that part of your letter. Is it not natural and rational too, that a woman ſhould conſole herſelf for your loſs, by liſtening to the addreſſes of a perſon who knows ſo much better, how to prize her beauty and merit? Now prithee inform me, my good client, by what rule in equity you are become *plaintiff* in this ſuit? Examine your conſcience, and ſubſcribe to Madame *de Sevigné's* expreſſion, that *your heart is mad*, my poor Marquis!

However,

However, the propoſition you make me is whimſical enough. It would be ſome ſport certainly, to aſſiſt in your ſcheme of revenge, againſt your faithleſs miſtreſs. If it was only out of ſpleen, on one hand, and for the oddity of the thing, on the other, we ſhould commence a ſort of a mock-amour, forthwith. But ſuch a frolic may take an unlucky turn perhaps; for love, even the moſt innocent, may be compared to a kitten, that is apt to ſcratch you, while you are only playing with it.

Therefore, friend Marquis, you may keep your heart to yourſelf, for me; I ſhould make a ſcruple to deprive commerce of ſo choice a commodity. Beſides, I am really ſo weary of the inſipidity of men, that for the future, I ſhall trouble myſelf with none of them, except my friends. One always feels ſome regret at parting with a lover. I

begin to taſte the ſweets of repoſe, and would continue to enjoy them.

It is whimſical enough, that you ſhould firſt imagine you needed conſolation yourſelf, and then take it into your head that I required the ſame relief, becauſe the Marquis *de* - - - - is gone upon his embaſſy. Indeed you are deceived. My friends ſuffice me, as I told you before; and if you would remain among that number, I adviſe you to ſend me no more *billet-doux*—otherwiſe— Adieu Marquis.

LETTER LIII.

I Declare Marquis, that I ſhall at once, break off all manner of commerce with you, for the future, if you continue to accoſt me in the way you have lately done. What evil ſpirit has put it into your head, to attempt rivalling the abſent? Was any creature ever ſo teazed

teazed and rallied as I was yeſterday evening? However, you entered into your part with ſuch addreſs, that whatever mind I had to be angry with you, I could not find in my heart to be ſo. What kind of event this may take, I cannot ſay, but this one thing is certain, that you ſpend your time very idly; for be aſſured, that I have not the leaſt ſymptom of paſſion for you, at preſent; and what is more, I can anſwer for it, that I never ſhall. Yes, Sir—never. But, 'tis merry enough, to perſuade one that they are afflicted, that they want conſolation; in ſhort, to take upon you to judge of others feelings, better than they can themſelves! this is like the impertinence of the ſhoemaker, who pretended to tell his cuſtomers, where the ſhoe pinched them.

But to ſpeak of this matter, a little more ſeriouſly. Prithee reflect for a moment, upon the folly of your at-

tempt. Would it be generous, would it be decent in me, think you, to ſupplant my friend? For a woman who has aſſumed the character of a *Mentor* with you, who has acted the part of a parent to you, to dwindle after all, into that of a miſtreſs? Rambling libertine as you are! if youth and beauty could not hold you, what bands ſhould ſuch an old maid as I, pretend to tye you with? Perhaps, your ſole view in my conqueſt, may be meerly to know, whether love is the ſame with me in practice, as it is in ſpeculation. But I will ſave you the expence of ſo much time and trouble, and ſhall ſatisfy your curioſity, *gratis*.

You muſt know then, that women, one and all of us, rarely act conformably to their ſentiments. This is what you would have the fulleſt inſtance of, in a commerce of galantry with me. All that I have ſaid to you, upon love

and

and women, would not inſtruct you after what manner I ſhould conduct myſelf, on ſuch an occaſion. There is vaſt difference between thinking and feeling; between acting for ourſelves and reaſoning for others. You would then diſcover in me, a number of ſingularities, that would ſoon make you weary of your engagements. I have quite a different caſt of mind, from moſt women. You may know them all, without knowing *Ninon*. And believe me, that all you might diſcover of new or extraordinary in me, would not repay you half the expence of inveſtigation. You ſet my price too high, I tell you beforehand: you expend too much in expectation; more than I am reſponſible for. I ſhould never *quit coſt*, believe me. Diſpoſe of yourſelf in a more brilliant liſt. The court affords you groupes of young and fair, with whom you will run no hazard of tiring yourſelf with exertions of wit and philoſophy.

I confeſs

I confeſs however, that I ſhould have been pleaſed you had called in to ſee me to-day; for I was moſt of the afternoon, plagued with a diſpute about the antients and moderns. It is bothering my head ſo much ſtill, that I am very near accepting your compliment ſeriouſly, that I am not yet, far enough on the decline, to occupy myſelf entirely, with the ſtudy of ſcience, or to bury myſelf alive, with muſty antients. If you would behave a little rationally, and drop the humour of making ſpeeches, I really think I ſhould prefer your company to any other, to interrupt and enliven, now and then, ſuch ſerious occupations. But you are ſo ungovernable, and ſuch a profligate, that I dare hardly invite you to ſup with me to-morrow. I miſtake in ſaying *to-morrow*; for it is now near two o'clock in the morning, and I conſider that my letter cannot reach you 'till noon: So take notice,

notice, that it is this very evening I expect you.

Will you complain of me now? Is not this an aſſignation in form? But let this careleſs freedom convince you, that I am not much afraid of you, and that I ſhall attend to your amorous views, no farther than will juſt amuſe me. You ought to know that I am not a perſon to be eaſily impoſed upon, that way. I have ye all by heart.

Adieu.

LETTER LIV.

I Ought no longer, to conceal from you, the laſt reſolve of the Counteſs, with regard to you. While I could preſerve her ſecret, without betraying the friendſhip I had conceived for you, I have been faithful to her. But ſhould I reſerve what I am now going to communicate to you, you would

would probably, have cauſe, one day, to reproach me ſeverely. Notwithſtanding the many infidelities you have been guilty of, whatever pains ſhe has taken, to perſuade you that you were intirely forgotten, you have never ceaſed to be moſt tenderly remembered by her. Tho' ſhe has endeavoured to puniſh you, by an affected indifference, ſhe could never refrain from the pleaſure of ſeeing you: And it was in compliment to her, that I have ſometimes feigned quarrels with you, in order to bring you the oftener on your penitentials, before me. But all theſe ſhifts have not been ſufficient, to ſatisfy a heart ſo intimately affected; and the Counteſs is upon the very criſis of executing a deſign, which I have a long time oppoſed. You may inform yourſelf of the particulars, from the letter ſhe wrote to me, yeſterday; and which I ſend you incloſed.

A Letter

A Letter from the Counteſs,
To Madame de L'ENCLOS.

"If you would remain my friend, "dear Ninon, ceaſe to combat my "reſolution. You know that it is not "a ſudden tranſport. It is neither "the reſult of a momentary reſent- "ment, an haſty pique, nor of deſ- "pair. I have concealed nothing from "you. The poſſeſſion of the Mar- "quis's heart, would have conſtitu- "ted my higheſt felicity, had I been "able to have inſured it for life. I "ſhould have been certain of loſing "it for ever, if I had been indiſcreet "enough to have accorded him thoſe "favours he ſollicited for. His in- "conſtancy has ſhewn me that the "oppoſite conduct is not always a cer- "tain method of preſerving a lover. "One muſt renounce this paſſion en- "tirely, ſince men are found incapable "of an attachment more tender, tho'

"not

" not leſs pure, than that of ſimple
" friendſhip.

" You know too well, that I am
" not ſufficiently cured not to feel per-
" turbations, every time I ſee the
" Marquis. Flight is the only remedy
" for this evil, and it is the one I am
" determined to betake myſelf to. I
" am not in the leaſt apprehenſive of
" what the world may ſay, upon my
" retreat into the country. I have pre-
" vented thoſe who might perhaps be
" ſurprized on this occaſion. It is
" known that I have lately gained a
" conſiderable proceſs, againſt my huſ-
" band's executors. I have made a
" plauſible pretext of going to take
" poſſeſſion of the eſtate of ----,
" which they conteſted with me. I
" have thus obviated the malignant ſa-
" tisfaction of the public, in putting
" their own conſtruction upon my
" election of ſolitude; and at the ſame
" time

" time, removed all ſuſpicion from the
" Marquis, of his having the leaſt part
" in this determination.

" I ſend you herewith, his picture
" and letters. Good Gods, how weak
" is human nature! Muſt it require
" a conflict then, to quit a plague!
" But the ſtrife is over—and my re-
" ſolves ſhall never—never falter more.
" Sympathize with me the mean while,
" my dear friend; and remember the
" promiſe you have given me in confi-
" dence, to declare the moſt perfect
" indifference, on my part. Whoever
" breaks off in reſentment, publiſhes
" their pique and regret at the rupture.
" 'Tis but a modeſt way of begging a
" reconciliation. And as I have now,
" not the leaſt deſire of renewing my
" engagements with the Marquis, I
" would have you return him the arti-
" cles I ſend you, obliging him, as
" we agreed upon before, to make me

" the

" the ſame reſtitution. You may ſay
" that the exigence of my affairs, has
" required me to leave *Paris*, for ſome
" time; but I intreat that you will not
" be the firſt to mention me to him.

" I ſhould be inconſolable, my dear
" Ninon, at parting from you, did I
" not hope to ſee you frequently in my
" retirement. You write freely to your
" friends; and if you judge of them
" by the tenderneſs and eſteem they
" bear you, there is not a ſingle one
" among them, more worthy of that
" title, than me. I reckon upon your
" correſpondence, 'till I ſhall have the
" higher pleaſure of your converſe.
" You are not now to learn my ſenti-
" ments about you.

Farewel."

I have no advice to give you Marquis, upon this occaſion; and all the favour I ſhall deſire of you is, never to expoſe

expoſe the diſingenuouſneſs of my conduct, in this affair, which the Countess would have juſt reaſon to resent. All that I have to excuſe me to myſelf, is, that you have loved her too fondly, to look upon this reſolve with indifference; and if I am not much miſtaken, I might perhaps, have injured the intereſts of both, by concealing it from you.

Adieu.

LETTER LV.

I AM charmed at what you have done, Marquis, and you are a moſt worthy creature, after all. Fear not—Your behaviour, my inſtances, and better than either, her own unextinguiſhed flame, will conſpire to conquer the reſiſtance of the Counteſs. Every thing ought to determine her to accept the offer you make her, of your hand; and I can venture to promiſe you, even at preſent,

preſent, that her pride alone reſiſts equally our intreaties, and her own inclinations.

I preſſed her warmly this morning, to declare in your favour, and her laſt defence was, the fear of new revolts, on your part. "Chear up, ſays I, "one very promiſing circumſtance, on "his ſide, is, that he is now undeceived "with regard to other women, upon "comparing them with the one he had "quitted. Men of ſenſe or principle, "have but a certain number of treſ-"paſſes to permit themſelves. The "Marquis has already paſſed through "thoſe which his youth and condition "of life, ſeemed almoſt to juſtify. "He indulged himſelf in them, at a "time when they might be at leaſt, "excuſeable. He has ſped all the "frolics of his age and claſs; and "having thus paid his tribute to the "*faſhion of the times*, he is become now,

"*free*

" *free of life*; and may be at liberty " to act agreeably to reaſon and virtue, " for the remainder of it. The only " objection, *of modern days*, that is " likely to ſtand againſt him, may be " his appearing too fond a huſband: " But this is a foible which will readi- " ly be pardoned in him, by thoſe who " either ſee, or know you.

" You riſk nothing then, my dear " Counteſs; you have yourſelf paſſed " through the character of a *fine lady*, " but had too much ſenſe to continue " in it, long. You quitted it upon " trial, and the Marquis imitates your " example. Remit therefore, his paſt " exceſſes, and ſuffer not yourobſti- " nacy to kill him with deſpair. The " world would exclaim againſt you."

In ſhort, I prayed and preſſed, without ceaſing, and left her in a ſort of irreſolution, which I dare ſay will ſoon be determined

determined in your favour, as her reſiſtance has probably begun already, to render her extremely uneaſy.

Well, Marquis, if the agitation that ariſes from all this, will give you leiſure to reflect upon what I formerly told you, will you not be apt to think me ſtill in contradiction with myſelf? I had at firſt, adviſed you to treat the paſſion of love *en cavalier*, and to trouble yourſelf with no more of it, than might juſt ſerve to amuſe you; and that either as lover or galant, you ſhould ſuffer yourſelf to be bound, by a *ſlip-knot* only. But I then ſpoke to you upon a general topic, and relative to the generality of women meerly. Could I at that time, propheſy that you would be ſo happy, to meet and engage with ſuch a charmer as the Counteſs, who to the beauties of her own ſex has

joined

joined all the merits of yours? What a lucky mortal you are! Now going to poſſeſs in the ſame perſon, at once the moſt amiable miſtreſs, and the moſt eſtimable friend! Deign to admit me a third in this choice union, and I ſhall not deem myſelf leſs fortunate than either. For if there be in nature, an higher bliſs than rejoicing in the happineſs of our friends, we muſt attend 'till angels ſhall pronounce it.

Farewel.

END of the LETTERS.

THE

THE

CONCLUSION.

The TRANSLATOR To the READER.

I Have here finiſhed this collection of letters, which I hope will entertain the reader as much as they have done the tranſlator; for in truth, there is an uncommon deal of wit, humour, ſpirit and philoſophic ſenſe, running thro' the whole.

However, it may be plainly perceived in theſe writings, that *Ninon's* principles of philoſophy, had been tainted by her converſation with the greateſt male wits of France, *La Bruyere*, *Rochefaucault*, *St. Evremond*, *Fontaine*, &c. For the cynical manner, in which ſhe treats the ſubject of love, is but part of that diſingenuous philoſophy, which the French writers in general, apply to every human affection or moral; reſolving friendſhip, gratitude, filial and paternal ties, in ſhort, every ſpecies and degree of virtue, into a *ſelfiſh motive*.

'Tis true, that Madame *de l'Enclos* has laid open the avenues, and inmoſt receſſes of the female heart, betrayed its weakneſs, and pointed out thoſe peculiar foibles, where the arts of men may attack it with moſt probability of ſucceſs. But then, it may at the ſame time be obſerved, that ſhe deſcribes

her ſex, in thoſe inſtances, as in *a ſtate of nature*, unimproved by education, unreſtrained by religion, and unaſſiſted by grace: And truly, under ſuch a ſtate of *original ſin*, ſhe has been perhaps, at too great an expence of addreſs, to circumvent ſo defenceleſs an enemy.

Moſt of the French writers determine the morals of mankind, from the ſentiments of their own breaſts. But reaſoning from particulars to generals, has never been admitted for ſound philoſophy. Tho' a thief at the gallows, confeſſes his conſtant diſpoſition to ſteal, we are not ſurely from thence to argue, that another man may not view a purſe of gold, with as little inclination to purloin it, as to rob a tulip of its colour.

To this claſs of writers, I could wiſh that the world would join in

refuſing their arrogated title of *Moraliſts*; and more juſtly ſtile them *Satiriſts*. Tho' I think that even this, would be treating them with too much reſpect; for as they ſpeak of human nature, rather with the contempt of a *Lampooner*, I ſhall always chooſe to deem them *Libellers* of mankind.

Such men may be ſaid, as my friend remarks, in his notes upon tranſlation, [a] to hold out the wrong ſide of tapeſtry to view, by which all the beauties of colouring and proportion are concealed, and only the groſſer lines and coarſer figures expoſed.

The pleaſure, conſequent to acts of benevolence and charity, has been often miſtaken for the end; from whence, ſelfiſhneſs has, by ſuperficial reaſons,

[a] *Eſſay on claſſic tranſlation*, in this work. See latter part of the *tranſlator to the reader*.

been

been imputed to virtue. But a very little abſtraction may help one to diſcover, that pleaſure is the *companion* only, and neither the *end*, or *motive*. To ſupport life and health, is the intent or purpoſe of eating and drinking. To theſe the reliſhes of taſte are added, from the meer bounty of Providence; to *gratify*, as well as *ſatisfy* the natural appetites. And the pleaſure ariſing in the mind, upon having done, or even deſigned any worthy action, may be ſomething analogous to this.

I ſhall make uſe of the above alluſion, farther, to carry me through the argument I would maintain; for I do not deny, that there is a *moral epicuriſm*, as well as a *natural one*; and that by frequent contemplation upon the *concomitant* pleaſure, it may become at length, the ſole *end*, in particular agents. So that virtue may thus be reduced to ſenſuality, and have its pure eſſence quite deſtroyed,

deſtroyed, in the minds of ſuch perſons. But ſurely, this does not alter its original nature, any more than different colours become one, becauſe the jaundiced eye perceives them alike, through a tainted medium.

It is a received opinion, that the bulk of mankind do not know the real motives from which they act. It is poſſible indeed, that I, for inſtance, may be guided by principles, which I may be ignorant of. But then, in the name of common ſenſe, how come theſe preſumptuous reaſoners to be better acquainted with them, than I am myſelf? When ſuch ſubtle philoſophers pretend to tell me, that I am actuated by motives which I am not conſcious of in my own breaſt, they ſeem to talk as impertinently, as the *ſhoe-maker*, mentioned by *Ninon*, juſt now [5].

Letter LIII. laſt lines of firſt paragraph.

Beſides,

Beſides, I will admit this ignorance, in *natural* actions only, in ſuch as are meerly *mechanical*. But with regard to *moral* ones, the nature of them is determined by the *conſciouſneſs* of the agent. And if his reſolves ariſe ſimply, in his own mind, from principles of humanity, benevolence, or any other generous emotion, the virtue of them is pure and diſintereſted, notwithſtanding the *attendant* pleaſure; which ariſing only from ſubſequent reflection, can no more taint the excellence of the firſt impulſe, than poiſon thrown into a ſtream, can infect its ſource.

Readers, Farewel.
The Tranſlator.

FINIS.